

SQ Horror MAGAZINE

IN THIS ISSUE:
CHATTERING WITH
NICHOLAS VINCE



AND The Night Whispered

HORROR WRITER

DENNIS SANDZ



"THE TRIALS AND
TRIBULATIONS FROM
NEOPHYTE TO
DOMINUS IN THE
HORROR GENRE"

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MORE...

Issue #2 - July 2006



SQ Horror Magazine - SQMAG2.COM

THE TWISTED TWINS

Jen and Sylvia Soska
talk Hellelevator, the
Rabid remake, and their
WWE obsession

JESSICA FELICE JOHN WELLS AMANDA MARIE BILLY BLAIR TYLER LUECK ALEX RUIZ

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SQ Horror Magazine

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A SPECIAL THANKS

TO EVERYONE WHO MADE THIS
POSSIBLE, FRIENDS, FAMILY,
CONTRIBUTORS, SPOUSES,
SIGNIFICANT OTHERS
ALL THE RITUAL SACRIFICES PAID
OFF!

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SQ HORROR MAGAZINE #1

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GRAVE REMARKS FROM THE EDITOR

We are back! We took a month long break at SQ here to work on our distribution outlets and focus on building on the backend of the magazine. I'm happy to say that everything is humming along! There's still a lot of work to do, and not everything happens as quickly as one would like, but the future is bright. We've also added a few new contributors in both writing and comics. Even more for the already talented pool of folks here! Oh, and did I mention we are going monthly starting with this issue? Yep! 12 months a year. None of this Bi-monthly, digital only, quarterly crap. A new issue of SQ every single month year round!

Now on to the fun stuff! There's been a ton going on in the last two months. There's a new YouTube series in the works. Just a quick and simple "From The Editor" type thing. Catching up on the weeks evenup. The website has been gaining regular content and web only contributors as well. So there's so much more to see than just the monthly magazine.

A couple changes were made from the announcements in the last issue. Doug Jones unfortunately wasn't able to join us. His shooting schedule for "Nosferatu" kept him all tied up. Hopefully he'll be able to join us in a not-too-distant issue. The set visit to "The Possessed" was postponed as well. That's just kind of the nature of the beast. The shooting schedule was changed, so hopefully we will get that in very soon. Fortunately, the lovely Soska Sisters were able to fill in at the last minute! They were a blast to talk with.

As we move along in the months and years to come, you'll see a lot of unique and thoughtful content from us here at SQ. We're not just reviews and interviews. There are several incredibly intelligent writers here, and incredibly talented artists. It would be a shame to have them scrun up into this little box of reporting with no opinion.

Our publication schedule will be changing as well. Starting very soon we will be releasing on the last Wednesday of the month. This is to accommodate the distributors and stores. So be prepared to see SQ on store shelves very soon! Be sure to ask your local retailer about carrying SQ as well. The more places we can get into, the more we can drop the price! See you next month for our 80's in August issue! Thank you all for the support!

Ray Nichols
Editor in Chief



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THE TWISTED TWINS
Jen and Sylvia Soska talk *Hellraiser*, the *Rabid* remake, and their WWE obsession.

HEADLINES and DEADLINES

New Line has announced a new spinoff to *Conjuring 2*, *The Nun*. Based on the demonic nun in the film, James Wan is set to produce. Interestingly, the nun was not originally in *Conjuring 2*, but added just a "few" months before release!

The infamous house from *Asphyx* Horror is up for sale. For just \$850k you can own a piece of history, and likely never sleep again. If you survive the experience is.

The new demo for *Resident Evil 7* was released and caused a bit of confusion for players. It was heavy in the occult references and paranormal happenings, but the zombies were noticeably absent. Director of the game, Koshi Makenishi, confirmed that the demo is just that. A "Tonal preview". Rest assured zombie fans, they will return!

In more *Conjuring 2* news, a man dies at the screening in India. His body mysteriously vanishes afterwards. After he had passed away, his body was taken to hospital. When the attendants checked on the corpse, it was gone.

R.I.P.

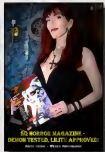
2016 Has been an exceptionally rough year. We've lost a lot of genuine cultural icons and persons of importance.

In Memoriam
May/June 2016

Ian Sander
Producer/Director
1947 - 2016

Makiko Futaki
Animator
1958 - 2016

Anton Yelchin
Actor
1989-2016



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Issue 1000 - Winter 2016

FRIGHTFUL FUNNIES

KILLER KATIE AND THE INDELIBLE STATE OF BEING



BY GEO BRAWN IV

GEO BRAWN IV

ARTURO LOUGA

Morgue



BY ARTURO LOUGA

ELIZABETH BATHORY - THE BLOODY COUNTESS

Countess Elizabeth Báthory was a countess and serial killer from the Báthory family of nobility in the Kingdom of Hungary. She has been labeled by *Guinness World Records* as the most prolific female murderer, though the precise number of her victims is debated. Báthory was accused of torturing and killing hundreds of young women between 1581 and 1609. The highest number of victims cited during Báthory's trial was 650. Despite the evidence against Elizabeth, her family's influence kept her from facing trial. She was imprisoned in December 1609 within Csenge Castle, and held in solitary confinement in a room whose windows were walled up. Upper Hungary, now in Slovakia, is where she remained imprisoned until her death five years later.

Illustration by Jason Brower



JASON BROWER



WRESTLERS, HOOKERS, AND SOSKAS. OH MY!

By Ray Nichols

The Twisted Twins, Jen and Sylvia Soska. If you don't know their work by now, I feel sorry for you. They really do epitomize the independent film maker that does things their own way. The Soskas have a style and presence that is not only infectious, but is refreshingly unique.

Hailing from Canada, these two were an overnight success after just 10 years. Film making is a marathon. Not just on a particular project, but as a career. Fortunately, Jen and Sylvia stuck to their guns. After a less than productive turn in film school, they released their first film, *Dead Hooker In A Trunk*. Building on the success of that, they continued working in the industry in other people's films. Finally, along came *American Mary* to throw them into the spotlight. A full Soska production, this created opportunities for them that continues today.

They've worked with several big names and have now been tapped to film the first Cronenberg film to ever be remade, *Rabid*. Along with touching on damn near every form of media available, the Soskas continue bringing their particular brand to the masses. SQ was lucky enough to catch up with them for an interview!

SQ: Where did your love of horror come from? What were some of your earlier influences?

Sylvia: It's so strange, because ever since I was a little girl I always had a fascination with horror, and I don't know if it was because it was so taboo for a little girl in a Sunday dress to wander into their local video store with a very decorated horror section. I always had a big draw to it. One of my earliest memories, and I think this had a huge effect on my life when I look back at it, is that Jen and I loved spiders. I remember we trying to find a giant spider in our yard, and we did.

Jen: As you do. (laughs)

Sylvia: As you do, yeah! (laughs) I was really, really little, and I

remember there was a family barbecue and the neighbors were over. I went over and was, "Guys look what I found!". And I remember holding up my hand with this big spider on it, as big as my hand and people just running and screaming. I just couldn't understand, so my mom had to take me aside and said, "That's not appropriate to bring a spider into it" I asked, "Why? It's not like it can hurt them." And she said, "Some people are scared of things, and it makes them act irrationally." I thought, "Even if they can't get hurt? That's so weird." (laughs)

Jen: I would have to blame my mom. My mom had, and still has, every Stephen King novel and every Anne Rice novel. The Vampire Chronicles was my *Twilight*.

(laughs) She would let us watch the movies of Stephen King if we read the book first. At a very young age reading through every Stephen King book, I'd read "Pet Sematary" and Sylv would read "The Skin", then we'd tell each other about what's happening. Then we watched *Polygraph* as kids. I believe that was the first horror movie I remember watching. I was so scared afterwards, my mom told me that, "There's a bunch of people, and it's their job to scare you." That was basically it for us. It was like, holy s***, it can be your job to scare people?

SQ: And your parents seemed to be very supportive of everything that you've been doing?

Sylvia: Oh, my parents have been so supportive. It's so weird, with my

parents. If your daughter wants to become an actress, most people are like, "No, no way." Whereas my dad when I was a little girl, would drive me out at six in the morning for auditions or to do extra work. The only two things I've never done, that they requested me not to, is never get a tattoo and don't become a professional wrestler. (laughs) Which was too bad because in high school I was saving up to go to the Shawn Michaels Heartbreak Kid School of Wrestling. They were always so supportive though. I remember when we started going into making our own films, it was like we always had these really weird talents that didn't make any sense. So much that you're encouraged as a young woman to become as an actress. They never say, become the president of your own film company or produce and write your own stuff. They don't say that enough. Then when we kind of got our interest in that, it was like, "Wow. I really like movies, but I really like being behind what I'm putting out there." My parents thought that totally made sense, and were always there through everything. It's really hard though. We've been doing this for ten years now, and it's something we're finally seeing success in. There are years where you wonder if it's ever going to happen and it's really hard. You're working really hard, and being broke for a long time to see any success.

"don't just quit your job and say you're going to be an actor full-time"

Jen: My parents they, thankfully, never said to get a normal job. Sure, you should have plans, don't just quit your job and say you're going

to be an actor full-time. It would be lovely if that's how the universe worked, but please don't depend on the universe. Be a little bit logical (laughs).

SQ: So they helped you get through film school?

Sylvia: Ah, no. I still have not paid for film school (laughs). We paid thousands of dollars for something that our agent at the time would get a 10% cut of if they recommended people, and when we said, "Oh I don't want to be an actress anymore. I think I'm going to go into stunt acting." She was like, "Well. You have to take the school, because that's the only way you can do it." We did have a great two week out-source stunt program, but after that it was this cold read course. Oh my god. I was already feeling so jaded by the industry. I want to change careers, and that's what's going on? We were so fortunate that it, for lack of a better term, f***ed us over that we decided to make *Dead Hooker In A Trunk* which was our first film. But it started as a short film inspired by *Grindhouse*, which was essentially a f*** you to the film school. We got the funding for our last project, which was \$200, and Jen and I were like, "You know what? That is it." So we took everything that was on this list that was too inappropriate for school projects, but we were doing it ourselves so we put everything in, and they didn't have bestiality or necrophilia. So we made *Dead Hooker In A Trunk*. When we showed it dead last at graduation half the people were cheering you couldn't hear the intentionally disgusting dialogue, and the other half just walked out. Like they were having none of it.



SQ: So no wrestling school, and film school went the way it went. Then you were actively working on being stunt-persons?

Jen: Yeah. We were kick-boxers and I liked to do Okinawan weapons. Which is Sai and Nunchucks and weapons like that. Because we figured hey, once we hit teenage age, the roles that were offered to us. My god. Slutty sorority girls, slutty alien, and it was never even sexually empowered aliens. It had to be trash where. So you know what? Maybe I'll be in a bikini film, but I'll be in a bikini and on fire, and that's respectable (laughs).

SQ: So was that something that you guys kept up with at all, as far as the martial arts?

Sylvia: No. We haven't done it in forever. Making your own film company and movies has been so full-time, we don't even have personal lives half the time. It's just hanging out with the people you love working with.

SQ: *Dead Hooker In A Trunk*, followed by *American Mary*. A huge, huge budget difference and cast difference. How was it going from *Dead Hooker* to *American Mary*?

Jen: One thing I will say is, that it's always easier to make a movie with more money. No matter what anybody tells you (laughs). If tomorrow I got a \$200 million movie, by the grace of god hopefully it would be

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 a Marvel superhero movie, and they said, "Hey Jen and Sylv. Are you worried about what you're going to do with \$200 million?" No man! I'm going to have all the time in the world. I'll probably have a Robert Downey Jr. in there. No way man, it's always easier to make it with more money (laughs). With *Dead Hooker In A Trunk*, I had literally finished reading "Rebel Without A Crew". Robert Rodriguez's book that everyone should own, and it says go make your own movie at the end. Don't just sit there and talk about it. Then on *American Mary* I was thinking, "What's a 3rd AD? Do we really need three of them?" (everybody laughs pretty hard). On *Dead Hooker* we were everybody! We did makeup, we did wardrobe, we were using all our own stuff. I really think that's a great way for people to start out, because you have to know what everybody does on set. You gain so much respect for all those positions.

Sylvia: You definitely, when you're working with other professionals, just get the best people that you can and let them do their jobs. I think that's something that a lot of films don't do. You'll hire one of the best makeup guys. Like we always hire Todd Masters and MastersFX. Sometimes people have so many opinions, and it's like, "Yeah but these guys have won a bunch of Emmy's and they've been doing it for 30 years. So maybe we should just ask them how the monster should go." Then they give you these brilliant ideas that are cost effective and look the best. It's a big part of

our brand. Bringing the same people on a lot of the time.

Jen: I think a huge part of our success with *American Mary* was, not only the respect is paid to the body mod community, but the effects of Todd Masters and MastersFX did for the film.

SQ: After the huge success of *American Mary*, then *See No Evil 2* comes along from the WWE. Then *Vendetta* for the WWE. How was it working for them?

Sylvia: It's funny, because *American Mary* brought a really art house crowd and I love those people. However, there is a specific group of *American Mary* fans that only want to see *American Mary*, and that's the only movie they ever want to see from us. Never anything different. They forget that this is also the film makers that brought you the fem classic, *Dead Hooker In A Trunk*. In the 90's Jen and I were the biggest WWF (accent on F) you could find, and we fell in love with wrestling when Shawn Michaels and The Undertaker were having their feud leading up to the big Kane reveal back in Bad Blood and Hell in a Cell. It had such a huge impact on our lives! We would go to the live events. You know when you're an outcast weird kid, you like having this crowd.

Jen: Wrestling is all-inclusive. That's the one thing about wrestling. If you know how to say, "Yes! Yes! Yes!" or "Rest In Peace," then you're part of the crowd.



Sylvia: It's bright! It's this great place. It's this pantomime. People say, "Oh I don't like wrestling because it's fake," and it's like, "Is that the reason you don't like film?" Come on man. It's a hell of a show. Anyone that's been in the front row knows what a great show it is. So when we had the opportunity to make *See No Evil 2*, and in the original draft (spoiler alert) The Undertaker was in it, and Jen and I lost our mind. We were like, "Kane and The Undertaker? Done!"

Jen: The Undertaker is by far my favorite wrestler. I remember when our representation gave us the script for *See No Evil 2* and it was, "Well keep an open mind." I had to correct them actually. I love wrestling (laughs). I think half the reason we did *See No Evil 2*, other than working on a project we really wanted to do, a slasher with Danielle Harris, but I wanted to be friends with every wrestler. Now I'm proud to say I get to talk to Gold Dust all the time. I mean those guys are the coolest.

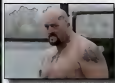
Sylvia: Yeah. They were just such heroes growing up and then you meet them. These are guys that are always going and doing Make-A-Wish and visiting kids in hospitals



or with the incoops. These are the coolest human beings ever. Then *Vendetta* comes along, and Michael Luigi the head of WWE studio wants us for it. People were asking, "You want the Soska sisters to do an action movie?" It's so funny, because we're chicks, a lot of times people have never seen our films but they say, "Oh they're sisters? This is going to be the most feminine, delicate movie ever. How are they going to do prison revenge movie?" But he said, "No. Trust me, they can handle it." The cool thing about an action movie is that, in a horror movie you need an attachment to a character, but in an action movie it's, Buddy comes in, kill buddy. Another buddy comes in, blow his head off.

Jen: They don't even need names. They don't need names, they just need to die horribly and suffer. I love working for the WWE. Proudly, we are the first female directors they've ever hired and the first directors they rehired.

Sylvia: And we got to work with the amazing Paul "Big Show" White. The fact that, that man isn't in anything. He is the most intimidating force. He's just so huge. Just him speaking, the way his lungs vibrate, the sound. He's just amazing!



Jen: He's like a human dragon. Ever since *The Princess Bride* I wanted to work with a giant, and I got my wish.

Sylvia: And he's fantastic in the movie. Then you get Dean Cain, who did such a great job in "Superman", and he got to play this horribly damaged character and he's just mandering people in prison. With Dean Cain doing it, it's just a little bit more cool than anyone else doing it. We are super proud of those movies.

Jen: Yeah. We basically made him the Punisher (laughs).

Sylvia: And if you watch the season of "Daredevil" with the Punisher in it, there's a Punisher goes to jail sequence. There are things that are very similar to *Vendetta*. Like we had our guy lifting weights in his own private gym, same thing there. I feel like Paul White would have been a much better, much scarier one (laughs).

SQ: What would Paul White not be scary in?

Jen: You know he's actually got the best sense of humor. He talks so foul. The first time I talked to him he was making a dick joke, and that was before even saying, "Hello. This is Paul." I knew we were going to get along solid.

Sylvia: The thing is, he's such a huge force. So he has to learn how to be disarming immediately, because people have a reaction. People either want to start a fight, or something. He's just a rarity. It's something we kind of have in common with him. In that, we're identical twins and that gets a weird reaction out of some people. Some people feel the need to have an interaction, whatever that is. So you want to disarm

things before it gets out of control.

Jen: Or just not leave the house. It's just better (laughs).

SQ: What's interesting there, the wrestlers are actors in their daily job. They have these characters they need to portray. How is it working with a wrestler in film



versus working with another actor?

Jen: The most interesting thing that really separates WWE super-

stars from television and film actors is they have to get it in one. If you say, "OK, we'll have to go again", for focus or lighting or for whatever reason. They are beating themselves up emotionally, because on the show it's live. It's like "Saturday Night Live", but it's the biggest live show and they do two live shows and live pay-per-views. So, that I've found, except for the wrestlers who have done plenty of film and get how it goes, they are just so wanting to nail it right away. And if you don't get it right away, they think it's on them.

Sylvia: But they're so insanely talented. People just don't appreciate them enough. I think it's because people always change their fads, and I think for some reason people don't think it's cool to love wrestling, but the fact is that it will always be cool to love wrestling. And those guys are so talented. I want to cast so many wrestlers in so many things, just so people can see how diverse they are.

Jen: Also, a wrestler will never do those s***y actor things where they start laughing for no reason, or they

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don't know their lines. A wrestler will never pull that actor s*** on you. They are so happy to have their lines too, because on the show those lines are changing right up to the minute they go. If there are lines.

SQ: After all of this, we get to "Hellelevator". How did you get involved with that?

Sylvia: This was so interesting. They did all the press releases before there were hosts attached, and Jen said, "Oh. This would be the best job ever."

Jen: Yeah. A survival horror game-show with Gameshow Network and Blumhouse? That sounded so awesome.

Sylvia: They setup a meeting where they were interviewing us, but they were only looking for one host, and someone who was an American because it shoots in Los Angeles. Then they were curious to talk to the twin director chicks (laughs). So then they talked to us, and Jen and I are always together and we have pretty good humor, and they thought that would be pretty funny. They thought it may be a pretty good fit between all of us, and it has been the most fun job in the world. I feel like I'm Arcade or Jigsaw man. I come into work and they're like, "Here's the contestants and here's the room that's going to squish these people. You want to play with the cels?" I'm like f*** yeah I do!

Jen: I've always liked to laugh at people that are getting scared for stupid reasons. I never thought I'd get to do it professionally. I usual-

ly just sit there watching horror movies taking the piss out of the people in them, and now I can do that with the stars of the horror movie who don't really know what the script is. That's the coolest thing about "Hellelevator". If you think that you're one of those guys, just like me, that watches a horror movie and says, "Oh I wouldn't do that. They're stupid for doing that." "Hellelevator" actually puts that to the test and proves that we all really do act stupid when we're scared.

Sylvia: We really did a psych profile on everybody in the first season, and we still want it to be scarier. The stuff we have coming up for season 2 is, well in the first season we had people being hung from suspension hooks, so you can imagine we're pushing the boundaries even more this year. I'm really excited about it. I think people are going to freak out. I think people are never prepared for how scary it is. They are miked, so Jen and I can hear everything they say and I hear so many people crying and talking about how they thought this was going to be fun. I don't know, I guess I'm just that type of horrible person that finds that incredibly funny, and I think the viewers should feel the same way too (laughs).

Jen: It is fun, but it's mostly just fun for us.

SQ: Now, how much creative input do you actually have on the show?



Jen: Actually it's a very collaborative experience. We talk with Blumhouse a lot and GSN and Matador. It's such a collaborative, team effort. We have made some suggestions. We always try out the traps also. Fyi, me and Sylv can always get out of the traps.

Sylvia: So far though. I mean, who knows what's going to happen each time.

SQ: Among all of these awesome projects, you've also found some time to work on some comics?

Sylvia: Yeah. I'm so stoked! I can die happy. I've written for Marvel. We got to do our very first story. Which is Secret Wars Journal #5. Which is cool. It had Daredevil in it, which Jen freaked out about because that's her favorite. That was through our friend Jake Thomas who was the editor on that. Then we came back because Neil deGrasse Tyson was unavailable. So if you're going to replace him you obviously think Soska sisters immediately.

Jen: I don't know who thought about that. It was Jake. Jake said, "Tyson's not available, let's go Soksas." It's the only way.

"It is fun, but it's mostly fun for us."

Sylvia: So it's *Guardians of Infinity* #8. I'm extremely, extremely excited. I think everyone who's seen *Guardians of the Galaxy* adore those characters. There's a new lineup of Guardians characters that are on the team.

Jen: The *Guardians of Infinity* series has been going so far, and I believe it's July 20th is when our issue comes out. I must say. Getting to write for, I'm a huge Starlord fan, being able to write stuff for Starlord to do? Such a nerd dream come true.

SQ: So then, you've been in pretty much every project you've ever done. In some way or another. Do you show up in the comics?

Sylvia: We do not appear in the comics, but there is something that if you are a *Soska Sister* fan you're going to think it's hilarious. You will see us depicted as characters in our comic that we're doing with Daniel Way. We've been in love with the writing ever since *Deadpool* and *Wolverine Origins*. It's a comic called *Kill Crazy Nymphos Attack*,

and it's this very dark satire. Our characters are the *Sister Sisters*. They are two nuns that get infected by this virus, then they become kill crazy nymphos who attack.

SQ: Now you've been named to do the upcoming remake of the Cronenberg classic *Robid*. How did that come about?

Jen: It's the coolest thing in the world! When they reached out to us about the project, and we knew it would be the first Cronenberg film ever remade. They're going to remake it one way or another. Whether I say no, or it's sacred or whatever. I do feel that Cronenberg films are sacred, and I hate remakes. *Sylv* and I are King and Queen of I F***ing Hate Remakes, but I love Cronenberg. I know that we can make a great film, and there were a lot of things in *Robid* that were touched on that are things that are even more relevant today. I really feel it's going to be more of a re-imagining. Like



his *The Fly*.

Sylvia: I don't see anything bad happening, when a fan says something like that. When you respect the original material, which I can say everybody on the team really loves Cronenberg films. They love the originals. You

know 10 years into Cronenberg's career he remade *The Fly* and that really launched his career, and now Jen and I have been doing this for 10 years and a lot of people don't necessarily know who we are. Some people will see the game show and go, "Oh. They direct movies also!" It will be nice to have something like this. This is the biggest film that we've done. I don't think anybody can look at us and think, "How dare they do that?" Because this is being done by people who love it, and I just love body horror. Being people who do female body horror, which is such a niche thing. I think this is exactly what people want to see from us. They know what we did with *American Mary*, so imagine that but with more of a sci-fi kind of approach to the material.

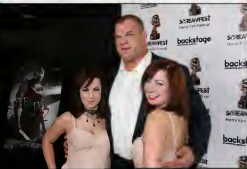
Jen: Absolutely. If you liked *American Mary*, you are going to love our *Robid* re-imagining.

SQ: Are there any other super secret upcoming projects you can talk about?

Sylvia: I have them, but I cannot share them (laughs).

Jen: I will say as I always say, I cannot wait to make a movie with Blumhouse. I love Blum-

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house. Working with Blumhouse on *Hellevator* is the greatest experience I've had working with anybody in our lives. I love what Jason Blum is doing. The only thing that he can improve on is hiring us (laughs).

Sylvia: You know what? Everything is just part of my 30 year plan to direct a Marvel movie, and hey man, I don't need the \$100 million ones. If you want a small character piece with interesting directors, I'm into it. One day, I'll keep working towards it. I think after *Rabbit*. I mean imagine us doing a *She-Hulk* movie. We love her, but obviously our favorite is Scarlet Witch.

Jen: I think *Black Widow* deserves a movie, and Josh Whedon has already directed two lets-just-say-*Black-Widow*-is-in-them movies. Lets have another take a crack man. Don't be Jay Leno about it. Gracefully bow out (laughs).

SQ: Which brings up, do you have any dream projects? Something you would like to work on, but haven't had the opportunity?

Sylvia: Last year when we started shooting "*Hellevator*" for the first season, my buddy Tanner went to a garage sale and he found the book "*Suuff*" by Chuck Palahniuk at a yard sale for a dollar. I read the first page, and I had to read the whole book. I'd seen *Fight Club*, but I've never read anything of his before. I got sucked in and I read everything. "*Survivor*" hit home for me. I read it on a plane, and as soon as I was finished I reread it. It was my favorite story ever. I think the director of *The Hunger Games* is attached to it,

and I'm not quite there in my career, but. Identical twins doing identical twins, suicide cult, then there's a relevangelist. I would direct the s*** out of that. I am also utterly in love with "*Invisible Monsters*". Especially because I love that kind of body

horror, and it's so much about transformation and being in your own skin. I just love his charac-

ters. Those are my two dream projects. Chuck is doing his "*Fight Club 2*" tour right now, and we're going to meet him in Los Angeles. I'm so excited. I'm going to bring him "*Survivor*" and "*Invisible Monsters*" and the new graphic novel for him to sign. I'm just so excited.

Jen: I would say a couple of my dream projects. I love *Rabbit*. I love everything Cronenberg has ever done, but obviously my favorite movie is *Dead Ringers*. I can't bulls*** and say *Rabbit* is my favorite. I liked it, but I loved *Dead Ringers*. I'd love to do it with two female doctors. I can't decide if they're going to be proctologists or oncologists.

Sylvia: It should be the Olsen twins too, and I'll tell you why. I know they've retired from acting. But they should come out of retirement for one film like this to show everyone how f***ing good they are and then they go back to being billionaires.

Jen: I'd take Elizabeth Olsen and Elizabeth Olsen. One actor playing both roles. The way Jeremy Irons played that, the two twins, holy s*** it was amazing. The Catholic in me really wants to do an exorcism movie. I want to do an exorcism movie so bad. *The Exorcist* is my favorite horror movie. As far as the best

made horror movie ever. I would never remake it. Especially after what William Friedkin said.

SQ: So then of everyone who has ever lived, who would you want to work with? Any actors, actresses, directors? Alive or dead.

Sylvia: Chuck Palahniuk. I could die happy. Anything with that genius man.

Jen: Obviously David Cronenberg is a huge influence. So being able to do this is the honor of all honors, but something most people wouldn't guess? Matt Stone and Trey Parker. I would love to make the bitchiest horror musical ever with those guys. I think they're so talented.

I mean, imagine us doing a *She-Hulk* movie."

SQ: Where else can people learn about what you are doing, and who you are?

Jen: On our website. TwistedTwinsProductions.net. Not .com, .net. That has literally everything on us and it connects you to all of our social media. And we run all of our social media. So if you're tweeting at us, you're tweeting at us. If we tweet back, that's us. It's not a robot. There's two of us, we can manage a lot of social media.

Sylvia: A bit of everything. We're @booksaistics on Instagram and we're @twisted_twins on Twitter.

Jen: And we're under our human names on Facebook.

Thank you again Jen & Sylvia!

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MONSTER RALLY MOVIES OFFER CREATURES IN COMBAT AND GRAPPLING GHOSTS

By Joseph W. Perry

When the news first broke on April 1, 2015, about a teaser trailer for a film pitting Japan's two most famous cinematic ghostly presences from the late 1990s and the new millennium against each other, many fans thought that this diabolical mash-up was a mere April Fool's Day joke — something to set the hearts and imaginations of fright film fans aflame in the tradition of the classic terror team-ups of decades past. That teaser was later announced, however, as an actual project, *Sadako vs. Kayako*. Yes, girl ghost Sadako Yamamura from *Ringu* (AKA *The Ring*) series battled the murderous mother ghost Kayako Seldi of the *Ju-on* (AKA *The Grudge*) franchise on big screens across Japan in June of this year. This shilling summer specter scrap provides the perfect occasion to reflect on some of cinema's classic and not-so-classic monster rallies — films in which popular cinematic creatures square off — and heftily battles of the past, decade by decade.

1940-1949

Screenwriter Curt Siodmak and Universal Studios struck paydirt when they had two of their monster movie icons face off against each other in *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* (1943). Lon Chaney Jr. reprised his role as Larry Talbot,

who became the Wolf Man on full-moon nights, while Bela Lugosi starred as Frankenstein's monster. How influential is this classic? For starters, it was given a soundtrack nod in *King Kong vs. Godzilla* and visual nods in *Alien vs. Predator* and *Freddy vs. Jason*. Universal would go on to produce more monster rally films in *House of Frankenstein* (1944) and *House of Dracula* (1945).



It was with the comedy smash *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (1948), though, that the formula paid off most handsomely at the box office. By then, though, Universal's monsters had largely had the frightening edge taken off of them for contemporary audiences. The "monster kids" — a new legion of fans, most of whom were born after the original Universal monster movies had their initial theatrical releases — who grew up with the advent of Famous Monsters of

Filmland magazine, first published in 1958, and the repeats of these movies on television returned Frankenstein, Dracula, The Wolf Man, The Invisible Man, and the studio's other horror characters to truly legendary status.

1950-1959

During the 1950s, it seems that movie studios were too busy creating new, original monsters of all shapes and sizes to wreak havoc on mankind than to focus on having already established creatures battle each other. The atomic age brought with it a plethora of "What if?" fears that impacted horror and science fiction cinema with creatures on land (the giant ants in *Them!* [1954], the oversized tickler arachnid of *Tarantula!* [1955], and the main character of *Attack of the 50 Foot Woman* [1958], to name but a mere few), water (the prehistoric *Rhedosaurus* from *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* [1953], the gigantic octopus from *It Came from Beneath the Sea* [1955], and Universal's own now-legendary gill-man from *Creature from the Black Lagoon* [1954] and its sequels, for example), and air (like the colossal bird from *The Giant Claw* [1957] or the pteranodon-like behemoths from Japan in *Rodan* [1956]).

1960-1969

Speaking of Rodan, his distinguished sometimes-nemesis, sometimes-ally Godzilla — this King of the Monsters surely needs no further introduction to SQ readers — had already battled fellow daikaiju Amurats in *Godzilla Raids Again* (AKA *Gigantis, the Fire Monster*; 1955), the first sequel in Toho's Godzilla series. It was the second sequel *King Kong vs. Godzilla* (1962), however, that became a major international hit and launched a beeping helping of future features in which Godzilla battled enormous foes (that, like Rodan, sometimes later became allies) on Earth and in space. Sure, there's the question of size difference between Godzilla and Kong, but viewers' willing suspensions of disbelief should be at a very noncritical level for this fun offering, which Toho wanted to keep light-hearted as it searched for a younger audience for its Godzilla films.

Rankin/Bass Productions, Inc. — well-known for its holiday television specials — and Embassy Pictures also decided to go for laughs with their *Mad Monster Party?* (1967) stop-motion animation comedy feature. The plot

sees Baron Boris von Frankenstein — voiced by Boris Karloff — try to assemble a "Worldwide Organization of Monsters" in an effort to achieve his dream of total destruction. Send-ups of Universal's monster-movie legends share screen time with zombies and a giant gorilla, with the likes of Phyllis Diller and Allen Swift providing voice talent.

1970-1979

The heyday of seriously produced classic creature features was several decades in the past for Hollywood but some international filmmakers were happy to pick up the torch. Although British Hammer Film Productions made many fantastic movies featuring both iconic and new creatures from the late 1950s into the early 1970s, their *Draculas*, *Frankensteins*, and *mummies* never met, alas. Spanish-language films picked up the slack, however, though unlike the monster rally movies of the previous decade, the laughs in these low-budget efforts were mostly unintentional, though plentiful.



Mexico combined its proud lucha libre — a style of professional wrestling — culture with monster cinema. Among this output is one of my favorite films, regardless of category: *Santo and Blue Demon Against the Monsters* (1970). For those who love fun with their horror, I can't recommend this head-scratcher highly enough. Wrestling legends El Santo (Sampson in the English dub) and the Blue Demon square off against a mad scientist, a werewolf, a vampire and his female minions, a mummy, and a Creature from the Black Lagoon rip-off that has to be seen to be believed. Highlights include repeated shots of the monsters coming over a hilltop one by one and an amazing nightclub scene that is worth the price of admission alone. This film warrants repeat viewings and recommendations to friends just so they can experience the same jaw-dropping "What is going on here?" factor that I — and hopefully you — did.

Spanish director Jesus Franco is infamous for his straight horror, erotica, and erotic horror output. His

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monster mash-up *Dracula vs. Frankenstein* (AKA *Dracula Against Frankenstein*, *Dracula: Prisoner of Frankenstein*, and other titles; 1972) includes those two monsters plus a werewolf, to boot. The film has its own beand of strangeness that makes it worth a watch.

Paul Naschy was another Spanish filmmaker who added to the *torpe-team-ups* filmography. His *Los Monstruos del Terror* (*Monsters of Terror*, AKA *Dracula vs. Frankenstein*, *Assignment Terror*, and other titles; 1970) stars Michael Rennie as Dr. Odo Warnoff, an alien who wants to use Earth's monsters to take over the world. Naschy stars as Waldemar Daninsky, a man who becomes a werewolf and a pawn in Warnoff's diabolical plans. Daninsky may also be the world's best hope for foiling the plot. This title is also recommended for those who enjoy international B-movie fun with a side of cheese.

Spain and Mexico didn't hold a monopoly on monster rally movies in the seventies, though. Prolific American B-movie maker Al Adamson served up *Dracula vs. Frankenstein* (1971), in which J. Carrol Nash, in his final film role, stars as the last of the Frankenstein line. Dracula (Roger Engel under the pseudonym Zander Vorkov) offers to help the doctor in return for an immortality serum. Lon Chaney Jr. also appears as the doctor's assistant. This one is pretty much a mess but it has its fans who love it for its awfulness.

1980-1989

Director/cowriter Fred Dekker's *Monster Squad* (1987) is a lovable valentine to the Universal monster

movies for the young at heart, as well as a new generation of monster kids. It has become a cult classic over the years. A group of young friends who love classic creature features make up the *Monster Squad*. They find themselves in the middle of an adventure to find an amulet before it spells doom in the form of Dracula taking over the world with the help of the Mummy, the Gill-Man, and the Wolf Man. The Stan Winston Studio provided the monster makeup and effects. This is arguably the most fun, most impressive American monster rally effort since *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*.



1990-1999

Charles Band's *The Creeps* (AKA *Deformed Monsters*; 1997) is another comedy monster mash. It uses diminutive actors as the creatures to tell a story of yet another mad scientist attempting to bring Frankenstein's monster, Dracula, the Mummy, and the Wolf Man to life to do his evil bidding, but because of a series of incidents, his experiment results in each creature being only about three feet tall.

2000-2010

The two biggest horror icons of the 1980s finally clashed with each other in 2003, thanks to *Freddy vs. Jason*, a box office smash that met with mixed reviews from critics and fans alike. Freddy Krueger, the dream-stalking murderer from the *A Nightmare on Elm Street* movies, meets his match when he is brought back into the real world and has to face ever-resurrecting slasher Jason Voorhees from the *Friday the 13th* franchise. While diehard fans were the obvious target market for this film, some of them took umbrage with the fact that Kane Hodder was bumped from playing Jason by New Line executives in favor of Ken Kerrieger. The latter's performance met with mixed reviews but Robert Englund continued to thrill the faithful with his portrayal of Freddy.

Extraterrestrial 1980s fright icons clashed soon thereafter in *Alien vs. Predator* (2004). Lance Henriksen stars as a billionaire who leads an expedition near the Antarctic and uncovers a pyramid in which Predators hunt Aliens as a rite of passage. The film exploded at the box office, though critics and fans were divided on how good it was. The special effects were generally well received, though. The movie's financial success spawned a sequel, *Alien vs. Predator: Requiem* (2007).

Writer/director Stephen Soderbergh's *Van Helsing* (2004) was lambasted by critics and moviegoers on its initial release, but it did well at the box office. Many viewers feel that it is a fun popcorn movie that may not have delivered what old-school fans were hankering for — especially in how it plays fast and loose

with the histories of Universal's (and literature's) monster canon characters — but that provides a great deal of action in its tale of monster hunter Van Helsing (Hugh Jackman) and his bid to put down Dracula, Frankenstein's monster, werewolves, and some other bad-dies.

How to Scream (2009) is a low-budget, independent black-and-white homage to the Universal monster rallies that is big on heart but not entirely successful. The acting is sometimes stiff and the plot is definitely a slow burn effort. Ron Chaney, the great-grandson of Lon Chaney and the grandson of Lon Chaney Jr., stars as mad doctor Bela Reinhardt, who has invited guests to his castle to, unbeknownst to them, compete in a dastardly game of death. Potential viewers should go into this film knowing that is a "for fans, by fans" effort.

2010-present

The early-to-mid-2010s saw the release of two low-budget indie monster mash-ups, both of which were ill received. *Monster Brand* (2011) mixes creature feature mainstays and professional wrestling, which to me sounds like the perfect formula for 90 minutes or so of fun entertainment, but the effort has been panned for a complete lack of plot and bad special effects.

Frankenstein vs. The Mummy (2015) didn't fare much better with viewers, with the main gripe being that the two title characters don't face off until the very end of the movie.

An extremely bright light for fans of monster mash-ups is the successful and highly regarded Showtime TV series "Penny Dreadful", which treats its approach to combining classic literary monsters with reverence and respect. The result is a well-acted, interestingly written, solidly directed series now in its third season. To reveal all of the legendary characters who appear on the show and all of the surprises that it holds would be a disservice to new viewers, but suffice it to say that Timothy Dalton and Eva Green headline an incredible cast, and that season 1 introduces Dr. Victor Frankenstein (Harry Treadaway), his creature (Reo Kinnear), and Dorian Gray (Reeve Carney), for starters.

2016 and beyond

With Rie Ino and Takako Fuji announced as reprising their original roles as Sadako and Kayako, respectively, *Sadako vs. Kayako* has my full attention, especially after watching the terrific trailer. Mizuki Yamamoto stars as Yuri Karahashi, who finds herself caught between the two specters after watching a cursed videotape.

Here's hoping for an international release sooner rather than later.

What does the future hold? Only time and studio budgets will tell, but some projects are in the works. Legendary and Warner Bros. Pictures have announced a 2020 release date for a second clash between Japan's most famous kaiju and America's own titan of terror with *Godzilla vs. Kong*. Before that, it is quite possible that we could see *Godzilla square off against new or familiar daikaiju opponents* in 2018's *Godzilla 2*.

Universal Pictures has announced the rebooting of its classic monster franchise, kicking things off with *The Mummy* in 2017. This retooling is slated to star Tom Cruise as a U.S. Navy SEAL and Russell Crowe as Dr. Henry Jekyll. Another announced attachment is Johnny Depp for *The Invisible Man*, while rumors have Universal courting Angelina Jolie for *The Bride of Frankenstein*. The studio has made it quite clear that it wants to turn these films into an Avengers-like franchise, which has fans of the classic original Universal output up in arms. It will certainly be interesting to watch the development of this idea.

With some horror icons in the public domain and others on the rise — or perhaps momentarily forgotten and waiting to rise once again — the future of team-ups involving titans of terror could hold even more in store for fright-film fans. Let's hope for the best and hopefully — like with some of the bad films I have mentioned — have fun with the worst! ○



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Lights Out (2016)

Director:
David F. Sandberg

Stars:
Teresa Palmer
Manny Delia

Synopsis:
A frightening entry with a mysterious attachment to their mother, Sophie, has remerged. But this time, as Rebecca gets closer to unlocking the truth, there is no denying that all their lives are in danger... once the lights go out.



Carnage Park (2014)

Director:
Mickey Keating

Stars:
Ashley Bell
Pat Healy

Synopsis:
A bank robbery gone wrong leaves Vivian (Ashley Bell) the hostage of two criminals on the run. Things go from bad to worse when they wind up on the desert outpost of a deranged ex-military sniper (Pat Healy), in a deadly game of cat and mouse.



Viral (2014)

Director:
Henry Joost, Ariel Schuman

Stars:
Analeigh Tipton
Sofia Black-D'Elia

Synopsis:
Following the outbreak of a virus that wipes out the majority of the human population, a young woman documents her family's new life in quarantine and tries to protect her ailing dad.



The Purge: Election Year (2016)

Director:
James DeMonaco

Stars:
Frank Grillo
Elizabeth Mitchell

Synopsis:
It's been two years since Leo Barnes (Frank Grillo) stopped himself from an act of revenge on *Purge Night*. Now he serves as head of security for Senator Charlie Roan (Elizabeth Mitchell).



Nerve (2016)

Director:
Henry Joost, Ariel Schuman

Stars:
Emma Roberts
Sam Claflin

Synopsis:
A high school senior finds herself immersed in an online game of truth or dare, where her every move starts to become manipulated by an anonymous community of "watchers."



Ghostbusters (2016)

Director:
Paul Feig

Stars:
Melissa McCarthy
Kristen Wiig

Synopsis:
30 years after *Ghostbusters* took the world by storm, the beloved franchise makes its long-awaited return. Director Paul Feig brings his fresh take to the supernatural comedy, joined by some of the funniest actors working today.

Leave a Light On High Hopes for



lights out

By Erin Miskell

The transition from a short film to a feature-length film is always one that worries the onlookers and the industry insiders alike. When a short film is well-received, such as David F. Sandberg's 2013 effort *Lights Out*, it becomes even more perilous. After all, if the transition goes poorly, then the short will forever have a pall cast upon it: "It was so awesome until they made that terrible movie!" (I'm being kind; the internet is not as sanitary in its descriptions under normal circumstances.) And so we watch with bated breath as the calendar ticks away until *Lights Out*'s release in July 2016.

Here's the thing: I don't think this is going to go badly. Sandberg knows how to do shorts well. And well he does: if you haven't stopped by YouTube and watched *Attic Panic* (or anything else he's done for that matter), you're only hurting yourself, baby. Some may argue that based on his experience in shorts, we haven't gotten a chance to see a feature-length film from him before, which means that there are going to be pitfalls: will he run out of steam, does he know how to handle a larger budget, etc. I will concede that this is true, but this is where I find that aspect exciting. This is his first time out of the gate in this respect; this is the evolution of a short filmmaker, the next valid step. We have seen what he can do to us in three minutes. I don't know about you, but the short version of *Lights Out* STILL manages to get me. Why? It taps into a primal fear, much like his other short films. There is

a deep fear that we are not alone, despite that we're the only ones in the house. It doesn't need dialogue or performances that will garner Oscars — this is what makes us afraid. Deep down, we're still little kids that get freaked out when the lights go out and we're in the dark, watching the shadows on the wall. That's why some adults won't look under the bed; we don't want to see what's under there, waiting for us, so we pull the covers up over our heads and hope that sleep finds us before the monsters do.

Being uber nosy and impatient, I reached out to Mr. Sandberg with some questions, and he was kind enough to answer. When asked what gave him the idea for the short, he replied, "It was inspired by something I'm sure most people have experience[d]. When you turn off the lights at night and you think you see something in the shadows and you have to turn them back on just to check what that is. Usually it's just a pile of clothes or a coat hanger or something but what if it wasn't?" Totally with you there, man. I know I'm afraid of the dark some nights (side-note: don't watch *Last Shift* by yourself with a furnace that's acting up and a foundation that's settling. Just sayin'). Makes sense. So what happened when I asked about other aspects of the transition? In a brief interview, some pretty honest answers.

SQ: The pacing in all of your films, from *Lights Out* to *Attic Panic* to *Coiffer*, is pretty hang-on. It knows

when to build tension and when to give the audience the payoff, and it's a trademark of the films. Did you encounter any challenges with this aspect when moving to a feature-length film?

David F. Sandberg: Well one challenge was that one of the producers was kind of freaking out about how short the film is. It's like 80 minutes or so. But I think most movies are too long anyway and nobody who has seen the film has felt it was too short. It feels just right. Otherwise it was nice to be able to actually have fleshed out characters and moments. When you're making a three minute short you just have to get to it and if that means your character has to do stupid things to advance the plot so be it. That's actually one of the things that people have liked about the feature, that the characters don't just do the typical stupid horror movie stuff and get themselves killed.

SQ: You started out making films without a budget with your wife, Lotta Losten, in your apartment. What have you found the addition of a budget did to *Lights Out*?

DFS: So many awesome things. One thing was to be able to have a production designer. When you're shooting no budget you just use what you have and try to make the best of it. On the feature we had production designer Jennifer Spence who made everything look awesome. Weirdly enough in some ways there were actually limitations that you

don't have when you're working no budget. We shot at a school that we weren't allowed to show the name of. Normally I'd just paint that sign out on my computer with free open source software but since things have to go to the proper channels on a real production and we didn't have that in the vfx budget Jennifer had to make an actual sign and put on top of the real one. I did wind up doing a handful of vfx shots myself in post anyway. Nobody complained then. I mean I was doing work for free so there was

no downside. But overall the addition of a budget allows you to work with all these talented people who are experts in their field and allows you to create things you just can't do by yourself.



I'm going to take a page from Sandberg and bow out before I get too chatty. I for one am looking forward to this one. A horror film that's not going to overstay its welcome, with enough of a brain to give characters actual motivations, and actual appreciation of materials at its disposal? Yes please. If you haven't checked out his site, head on over to <http://daniel.com/> to whet your appetite. And as always, leave the lights on. Just in case.

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NOVELIZATIONS:

MORE THAN JUST **DISPOSABLE** MEMORABILIA

By Kieran Fisher

Much like physical content in general, the horror movie novelization just isn't as popular as it used to be, and that's a damn shame. Often based on original screenplays, the novelization can be even more fulfilling than the films they mostly re-tread; as they often delve deeper into the events depicted on screen, thus providing a somewhat insightful alternative into how the films were, originally intended to be realized.

Though the cynical or business-savvy may regard novelizations as commercial cash-grabs that seek to take full advantage of a movie's fan base, it is not uncommon for them to be just as enjoyable as their cinematic counterparts, particularly amongst the faithful fans that they are intended for. That being said, they don't receive much credit in literary circles, or as companions to their filmic bedfellows. Often dismissed as derivative merchandise with nothing substantial to offer, they're easy to dismiss when it comes to having artistic purpose and value. For authors they tend to be nothing more than a pay cheque, but for fans, their imprint will be forever etched in the fabric of genre fandom, and for that reason they deserve to be acknowledged.

As a kid, the only way to experience many of the horror movies I wanted to see was through novelizations. My mother wouldn't allow me to watch real horror until my teen years, and as books were easier to acquire than VHS tapes, novelizations were my only alternative. For many

brudding genre enthusiasts seduced by the macabre at any early age, this was our introduction to the films that would later define our tastes. But it was audience inaccessibility that made novelizations popular in the first place, dating back to an era prior to the inception of film.

Before audiences were entranced by the cinematic play of light and shadows, live action plays, puppet shows and light boxes – the rudimentary precursor to cinema – were the only way to experience storytelling outside of the world of print. Even the most popular plays could only be seen by a small audience, so, in order to fully capitalize on their reputations and people's desire to see them, they were re-told in novel form for the mass public consumption.

The most famous theatre novelization dates all the way back to the 17th century with George Wilkins' adaptation of William Shakespeare's *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, titled "The Painful Adventures of Pericles, Prynce of Tyre", and published in 1608. One could argue that novelizing theatre was done for practical reasons due to the exclusivity of the medium; regardless, it paved the way for cinema to follow-suit. It's a fascinating world with a rich history worth exploring, as it may be surprising to genre fans to find just how many of beloved – and not so beloved – horror films have received the treatment throughout the years.

The now lost 1927 film *London*

After Midnight – directed by Tod Browning and starring the iconic Lon Chaney – was the first notable horror film novelization. Written by Marie Coolidge-Rask and published in 1928, this was a helpful companion piece to the film, as the exposition helped make more sense of the story and gave the characters an added layer of depth. Though the film in its purest form is but a whisper in the echoes of the forgotten vaults of horrors haunting cinematic history, the original script can be found online for fans wishing to compare it with Rask's interpretation.



As cinema moved into the 'talkie' era, the novelization would accompany it. In 1932, *King Kong* received the treatment as a marketing ploy to generate buzz for the film's release the following year. Despite being credited to authors Edgar Wallace and Merian C. Cooper, its creation was the source of much conflict; it was later confirmed that it was in fact written by D'Los W. Lovelace, with Wallace supposedly serving as nothing more than an ideas man. Regardless of who wrote it, it spawned an illustrated sequel in 2004, written by Brad Strickland

with John Michlig, entitled "King of Skull Island". This was just in time for Peter Jackson's cinematic remake in 2005, which also received a novelization courtesy of pulp author Christopher Golden.

It wasn't until the 1970s that the novelization would truly spike in popularity, due in no part to the massive success of *Star Wars* and *Alien*, which spawned their own novelizations that sold millions of copies. The huge sales of these lent a lot of commercial credence to the medium, inspiring other films to take full advantage of this alternative. This was a landmark decade for the novelization, with the majority of popular – and not-so-popular – horror and science fiction adapted.

Peter Benchley's novel, "Jaws", published in 1974, provided the source material for Spielberg's classic motion picture. However, subsequent literary entries would be nothing more than retellings of the original scripts for the film sequels – and they all received one, including the much maligned *Jaws: The Revenge*. Though it may be considered shameless, this trend perfectly encapsulates the green-eyed mentality attached to the decision-making process behind novelizations which have given the medium a bad rep in certain circles. In all fairness, as passable works of fiction, they are more than service-

able, if a tad unspectacular.

With the success of novelizations during this period, it wasn't uncommon for authors to adapt previous hits either – and sometimes, even the filmmakers themselves would jump on the trend. In 1978, The "Wicker Man" was re-written by its director Robin Hardy. The book followed the plot of the film closely, but it incorporated additional backstory not present in the film version, either due to not having the resources to include it, or having omitted scenes for the final cut.

During this boom period of the novelization, John Carpenter was at the forefront of genre cinema, his films no stranger to novelization form. *Dark Star*, *The Fog*, *The Thing* and *Escape From New York* found their way to pages after the screen, but it's the novelization of his seminal classic *Halloween* that stands out the most. In October 1979, the film was nationally re-released, and this coincided with a novelization of the film by Curtis Richards. His book expands the storyline of the film; it begins with a prologue set in medieval Ireland in which a spurned man, Enda, kills the woman he loves and the man she's set to marry on Samhain. He is then executed for his crimes and his soul is cursed, possessing men throughout the centuries to murder young couples.

The book explains that Myers has been possessed by the spirit of the murderer, and this is why he kills his sister and then stalks Laurie and her friends, due to Laurie reminding him of his own sibling in a previous life. Fascinatingly, the book also expands upon Myers' time at Smith's Grove Sanatorium, where he has an almost supernatural ability to exact revenge upon anyone that gets in his way.

Interestingly, elements from the book would find themselves incorporated into Rob Zombie's controversial remake in 2007. While Carpenter's streamlined film depicting Myers as an ambiguous force of evil is the most effective way to experience The Shape, Richards' novelization still manages to give him an adequately



chilling back story nonetheless. Following the success of *Halloween*, novelizations of its 1981 sequel and *Season of the Witch* from 1983 would also be published in lieu with the respective films, and met with impressive sales and acclaim from fans. Both were written by renowned author Dennis Etchison – under the pseudonym Jack Martin – as gigs-for-hire, and as to be expected from a writer of Etchison's prowess, they're both well-written slices of horror fiction which admirably complement their cinematic peers. Etchison also wrote the aforementioned novelization of Carpenter's *The Fog*, which would be the only one he'd publish under his real name. In 1983, Etchison, under the Jack Martin moniker, would pen one final novelization – this time for David Cronenberg's science fiction body horror *Videodrome*, before moving on to enjoy a successful career on his own merits.

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During the '70s and '80s, most of the genres' big name films and their sequels would receive their own novelization at some point, as would their knock-off counterparts and lesser known titles. For every novelization of *The Omega*, there would be one for rip-offs like *Holocaust 2000*. For every *A Nightmare On Elm Street*, there was a *Shocker*. In fact, it's worth looking up novelizations for any horror film your mind can muster; you might be surprised at how many have received the treatment.

In recent years, the novelization hasn't been as prominent as it was in days gone by. Nowadays, tie-ins that expand filmic universes - whether they are novels, comic books or even video games - have taken precedence for the most part. However, the novelization is not a lost art completely, even if they do slip by under the radar more so than ever before. Nowadays, they're mostly given to films with huge marketing

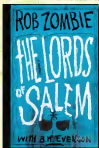
campaigns. That being said, for those of you who felt bewildered by Rob Zombie's *The Lords of Salem*, you might be pleased to know that a novelization penned by the rocker-cum-director himself fills in the equator-sized blanks of the film - with an extra sprinkling of white trash, Satanism and carnage for good measure. Look around, and you'll find a few more worth picking up.

Perhaps nostalgia-tinted glasses have romanticized the halcyon days of novelizations more than they deserve, but anything that's entertained us for hours on end deserves to be

celebrated. As works of literature, they'll never receive the credit they deserve; their merits disregarded and forever overshadowed by their cinematic counterparts, relegated to filler for boxes best left forgotten in the attic collecting dust. Their legacies might never surpass the impurities of commercial memorabilia, despite having enhanced so

many of our favorite horror mythologies.

The authors who pen them might only view them as an opportunity to make a quick buck so they could pay their bills while they chase their own artistic dream. But for fans, they've allowed us to relive some of our favorite films; for newbies, they've introduced fans to some of their favorite films. In some cases, they've provided fresh perspectives on movies, just when we thought we'd experienced all they had to offer. Novelizations are often precursors to directors cuts, yet many of them also go off on their own interesting creative tangents. They might not light the world on fire, but they can add to the gruesome worlds that are special to us, and that's an accomplishment in itself.



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COSMIC HORROR in Lost Carcosa: True Detective as the Ultimate **WTF** Tale

By Rebecca Booth

True Detective, an American anthology of self-contained stories created and written by Nic Pizzolatto, exploded onto television screens in 2014. The first eight-part mini-series starred Woody Harrisson and Matthew McConaughey, as a pair of former homicide detectives in rural Louisiana embroiled in the hunt for a mysterious and murderous far-reaching Southern syndicate. Fans of straight police procedurals soon found themselves caught in a captivating Southern Gothic tale that spans several years and incorporates distinctly supernatural elements. In fact, with its direct references to the lost city of Carcosa from Robert Chambers' seminal collection of short horror stories, "The King in Yellow" (1895), itself subsumed into H. P. Lovecraft's literary canon of cosmic horror, one could argue that the series not only staked its place in mainstream popular culture despite its horror roots, but that it is a true example of Lovecraft's philosophical and existentialist weird tale.

The series begins with the pair being questioned, individually, by the Louisiana State Police Department; Hurricane Katrina destroyed the majority of the evidence files relating to their investigation of the murder of a prostitute seventeen years previously. The interviews serve as a formal device for flashbacks, revealing key information about the men, the case and their relationship. McConaughey's Rustin Cohle, a nihilistic alcoholic, is now a bartender. In his detec-

ing days he was referred to as the Taxman by colleagues, due to the large black notebook he carried everywhere with him as he diligently and dispassionately worked his way through successful cases. Harrisson's Marty Hart is a masochistic idealist, now a Private Investigator, who lives alone after neglecting his wife and daughters in favour of his workload and younger women.

In addition to this characterization and exposition, the interview set-up also acts as a narrative device in that it allows the different timelines to merge. When it becomes apparent that the case may not be solved after all, and that further parties were involved, Marty and Cohle leave the interview room in the present day in order to put aside their differences and continue their investigation. Despite their flaws and opposing natures, at its tell-tale heart, the series is about a trait shared by both men. Marty and Cohle are seekers of the truth, or the light in the darkness; they are true detectives in a truly weird tale of Southern Gothic horror.

The Southern Gothic literary sub-genre developed in America in the early 1900s, producing a new collection of novels, plays and short stories set exclusively in the American South. Southern Gothic writing is thus an extension of Gothic fiction, which originated in

England in the 18th Century, with novels such as Horace Walpole's "The Castle of Otranto" (1764); Ann Radcliffe's "The Mysteries of Udolpho" (1794); and Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein"; or, the "Modern Prometheus" (1818). These novels all contained elements of horror, death and romance, often revolving around events that appear to be supernatural but which have a natural explanation.



The word 'gothic' can be taken as an historical reference to the Goths, the people responsible for the first known example of Germanic language during the 4th to the 6th centuries AD. It denotes the Dark Ages, and the brutality, horror and decadence associated with this period. It also refers to medieval architecture; location is very much a character in itself in these novels – which often take place in castles, manors and monasteries. When considering that the earliest English novels were released during the 18th Century – a puritanical age of austerity and sexual repression – Gothic fiction spoke to opulence, desire, erotica and excess.

It wasn't long until Gothic fiction had spread into Europe; the genre was a notable influence upon the Schauerroman (sludger

TRUE DETECTIVE

novels) in Germany, which were much darker than their English predecessors, with a greater focus on necromancy and secret societies. Gothic fiction was thus used by authors to delve deeply into the history of Europe, and later America and beyond, allowing its audience to experience the thrilling terrors of the dark past.

Themes explored within the Southern Gothic include grotesque, eccentric or delusional characters, madness, dilapidated locations, supernatural elements that often centre around hoodoo (traditional African American folk magic or folk spirituality that can be associated with black magic), and sinister storylines full of crime, violence, death and deceit. Many works from notable authors in this area were adapted for stage and screen, such as: William Faulkner's "As I Lay Dying" (1930); Erskine Caldwell's "Tobacco Road" (1932); Carson McCuller's "The Heart is a Lonely Hunter" (1940); Davis Grubb's "The Night of the Hunter" (1953); and Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mockingbird" (1960).



The first series of *True Detective*, in addition to its Southern Gothic setting and characters, incorporates much of the core aspects of European Gothic fiction, as well as drawing on the work of specific American horror authors: H. P. Lovecraft, Robert W. Chambers and Ambrose Bierce. Countless reviews have

noted the direct references to Chambers' story in particular, "The King in Yellow", within the first series of *True Detective*, via the inclusion of text, symbols and titular allusions to a figure known as The Yellow King.

Chambers' "The King in Yellow" cites a meta-narrative, a play, throughout the collection of short stories; the play supposedly possesses secrets about the cosmos and thus induces madness in the reader. This mystery, or lack of definition, is what makes "The King in Yellow" a fascinating foundation for other writers to weave into their own original material and mythology, with inexhaustible potential. This was the case with Lovecraft, who was inspired to not only incorporate Chambers' text into his body of work, but to use this narrative device to create his own meta-text. The infamous fictional *Necronomicon*, a grimoire or textbook of magic, appeared throughout his stories.

The beauty of these imaginary texts is that their mystery has the potential to make the reader question their veracity; in doing so, these texts are the perfect instruments to propel existentialist or cosmic horror within Lovecraft's definition of the weird tale because they incite in the reader an emotional terror induced by a "certain atmosphere of breathless unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces". Lovecraft, in his essay "Supernatural Horror in Literature", goes on to state that the weird tale must therefore contain:

a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguards against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space [...] Therefore, we must judge a weird tale not by

the author's intent, or by the mere mechanics of the plot; but by the emotional level which it attains at its least mundane point [...] The one test of the really weird is simply this—whether of not there be excited in the reader a profound sense of dread, and of contact with unknown spheres and powers; a subtle attitude of awed listening, as if for the beating of black wings or the scratching of outside shapes and entities on the known universe's utmost rim. And of course, the more completely and unifiedly a story conveys this atmosphere the better it is as a work of art in the given medium.



Lovecraft's particular strand of philosophical horror, which generates the insidious atmosphere that permeates *True Detective*, thus lends itself perfectly to the mystery of Chambers' included imaginary text, "The King in Yellow". Many critics have analyzed the specific references to Chambers' play within the series in detail, conspiring to determine their individual meaning. The Yellow Sign is a glyph that appears throughout Chambers' book and lately is incorporated into several of Lovecraft's stories. It is described by one of Chambers' characters as "a curious symbol or letter in gold. It was neither Arabic or Chinese, nor as I found afterwards did it belong to any human script". Another character alludes to the symbol's power to render anyone who looks upon it under the possession of the

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King in Yellow or one of his heirs, which is very telling considering the familial connections within the sinister syndicate responsible for the murders within *True Detective*. A singular symbol appears throughout *True Detective*: it is painted on the murdered prostitute's back; Cohle witnesses a flock of birds forming the shape of the symbol when he has a hallucination – an after-effect of considerable time spent undercover when he worked within the narcotics division; and the twig-lattice structures, known as bird traps or devil nets, that appear close to the victims of the syndicate have also been likened to the spiral shape of the sign.

Similarly, the series adopts specific lines of text from Chambers' book and uses visual clues that point back to this material, reshaping it with a Southern Gothic slant. The following text appears in the notebook of the murdered prostitute:

*Along the shore the cloud waves break
The twin suns sink behind the lake
The shadows lengthen
In Carcosa
Strange is the night where the black stars rise
And strange moons circle through the skies
But stranger still is
Lent Carcosa*



– "The King in Yellow", Act I, Scene II

Throughout the episodes, symbols appear that refer back to this text: several characters have black stars tattooed on their bodies; Carcosa is referenced as an actual place by several characters; and the phrase 'time is a flat circle' indicates the cyclical shapes of the celestial bodies in the above text – the moon and stars, including twin suns. This cosmic reference equates to existentialist horror via the philosophical concept of eternal return; all energy and existence is recurring and infinite and outside of the fixed law of Nature, or meaning. Without meaning – societal and moral law – we are adrift in the abyss of "unknown spheres and powers". The murderous syndicate within *True Detective* operates outside of these laws and force Cohle, Marty and the audience to confront this notion of cosmic horror.

It can thus be argued that is in fact a culmination of these references that elevates *True Detective* to the position of the ultimate weird tale. Each singular element associated with Chambers' fictional work, "The King in Yellow", correlates to the mystery of the play itself. The insidious nature of this imaginary narrative – just as the Necronomicon works to the same effect in Lovecraft's literature – acts as a formal device that imbues the series with a cosmic fear of the unknown.

Chambers' work thus perfectly complements Lovecraft's idea of cosmic horror within the series, in the battle between light and darkness. This can be further explored with the use of the word 'Carcosa'.



The word 'Carcosa' first appeared in the short story, "An Inhabitant of Carcosa", by Ambrose Bierce in 1886. The predecessor to Poe, Chambers and Lovecraft, Bierce's influence on early 19th Century American horror is profound, not least in the direct reference of the word in Chambers' and Lovecraft's work. In Bierce's story, a man from the city of Carcosa awakens from a severe illness to find he is in an unknown land. Though he can clearly see, he is aware that is night and he wanders, stumbling across several animals and a man in animal skin. He eventually comes across a corpse in a dilapidated graveyard, untouched in centuries. Among the graves he discovers a marker etched with his name. He realizes that he is dead and that he is in the ancient ruins of the city of Carcosa.

Cohle and Marty can be read as inhabitants of Carcosa; both men have lost something and themselves. Cohle's marriage and life unravelled after the untimely death of his child, leaving him depressed and nihilistic. Marty's egotistical idealism cost him his family, leaving him emasculated and alone. The notion of cosmic

horror, that instinctual fear of the unknown, of the abyssal darkness, can be existential, philosophical or psychological; like Bierce's inhabitant of Carcosa, the series presents our protagonists as wandering the wilderness in perpetual night. In the battle between the darkness and the light, the lost city of Carcosa simultaneously haunts and is forbidden to our protagonists.

Thus, the series strips away the fixed laws of Nature in order to make the mystery the centre of its mythology and, as a result, forces the viewer to question the

veracity of the fictional work it references. The allusions to madness, existentialism and the very human fear of the unknown all work together to unsettle the viewer. The series is a thus a true incarnation of the weird tale, that "particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the demons of unplumbed space". Cohle seeks death at the end of the series – he is despondent that the pair couldn't uncover the mystery of 'The Yellow King' and has no desire to continue living without his daughter. This

is the true message of *True Detective*, and one that the audience can take comfort in; as Marty tells him, despite looking into the abyss, they made a difference. Cohle and Marty are the embodiment of the light, of meaning, in the perpetual darkness. They seek the truth, as the title suggests and, in doing so, confront the true cosmic horror of existence: the unknown darkness of the universe and within themselves. Despite the omnipotent black stars as we all search for the lost ancient city of Carcosa, *True Detective* reminds us that the light is winning.



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CHATTING WITH THE CHATTERER:

By Ray Nichols

Recently SQ had the privilege of speaking with Nicholas Vince. The one and only Chatterer from the Hellraiser series, and Kinski from Nightbreed. Nicholas is an accomplished writer as well, with two books of short stories available on Amazon now: *What Monsters Do* and *Other People's Darkness*. He even hosts his own talk show, "Chattering with Nicholas Vince". While still acting on occasion and producing plays based on his own works, Nicholas has also found the time to write and direct his first short film, *The Night Whispered*. SQ was able to catch up with Nicholas while he was deeply embroiled in the post-production of *The Night Whispered*.

SQ: How did you wind up becoming The Chatterer? Where did you meet Clive Barker?

NV: I met him at a party soon after I left drama school. We became friends and he asked me to model for him. If you find the Books of Blood with the covers he illustrated, you'll find my face on a couple of them. This was a couple of years before *Hellraiser*. Clive asked me to play Chatterer, but he had to persuade the producer - so I had some more headshots taken where I look really mean.



SQ: Then you followed up Hellraiser with Nightbreed as Kinski yes? How was it wearing that costume versus the Chatterer costume?

NV: The main advantage was I could see and speak lines. In Chatterer I couldn't hear, speak or see. As Kinski had a black beard and hair, I had to dye my chest hair black - a

process which involved making a join cloth out of plastic film. And explaining what I was doing when my neighbour knocked on the door.

SQ: During this time you were writing for the Hellraiser and Nightbreed comics as well?

NV: In *Nightbreed* there's a club scene and I was one of the extras, along with Neil Gaiman and the artist John Bolton. Clive had mentioned Marvel's adult line, Epic, were publishing the *Hellraiser* comics and he, John and Neil encouraged me to contact the editor Dan Chichester. Using the money I made on *Nightbreed*, I flew to New York for the first time and pitched Dan a story I'd outlined on the plane over. I wrote half a dozen stories for *Hellraiser*, 4 issues of *Nightbreed* and also worked for Marvel UK on *Wishheads* and *Mortigan Goth: Immortals* - which was re-published as part of the *Frontier Collection* in January of this year.

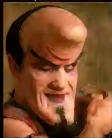
SQ: Then you took a significant break for awhile. What brought you back to film and storytelling

NV: Basically, I was made redundant. In 2012, had some money so decided to write and publish collections of short stories through Amazon. *What Monsters Do* is the

first volume and at the time of writing has 100% 5* reviews worldwide. I dramatised two of the stories from that volume as stage plays for The London Horror Festival, which were very well received. Other People's Darkness is the second volume and I'm working on making one of those stories into a short film later this year.

SQ: Of course you also have your show, "Chattering with Nicholas Vince". How did that come about?

NV: Writing is a very solitary profession and although I enjoy it, I thrive when I'm talking and working with other people. Also, I'm very aware how lucky I'm in terms of the heritage of the *Hellraiser* and *Nightbreed* films, and wanted to help independent authors and film makers by sharing their stories with some of my fans.



An Interview With Nicholas Vince

SQ: Now you've taken the helm on a new film, "The Night Whispered". What can you share with us about that?

NV: Having spoken to so many independent film makers, I really got the bug to have a go myself. It's been a really fascinating experience and although it's been hugely challenging, I really want to do more. I'm aiming to start submitting to film festivals in the next 10 days.

I was lucky enough to work with a lot of the people who worked on *Mindless* written and directed by Katie Bonham. She was gracious enough to agree to be my 1st Assistant Director which was a tremendous help.

Here's a synopsis: on a bitterly cold night, Ed, Bethany and Rachel, miss the last train home and reluctantly decide to walk through the dark country park. Uninvited, Samuel joins them. As they walk, one hears a whisper and turns, and vanishes. The others search, until they too hear whispers.

SQ: Along with the film you were keeping a very interesting blog on the film making process, detailing the pre-production process. Are there any plans to continue that?

NV: Yes, to writing more articles on that process. I have them planned, but I've had to take on more of the post production process than originally envisioned so they've taken

a back burner while I get the film finished.

SQ: When and where will "The Night Whispered" be making it's debut?

NV: Good question. Depends on which film festivals accept it.



SQ: Is there anything else on the horizon for Nicholas Vince?

NV: Apart from *The Night Whispered*, I acted in 4 short films (*Mindless* dir. Katie Bonham; *Rans* dir. Mark Logan; *Remnant* dir. Andy Stewart; *Retribution* dir. Paddy Murphy) and 1 feature, *Holloway* dir. MJ Dixon, last year, which are all in festival runs this year - so I'm hoping to attend some of those screenings.

As I mentioned, I'm working on the script for my next short film as director, based on the short story *Spoilers* and I'm supporting the London Horror Festival again this year, as a patron and I'm planning on filming some interviews with the companies which are part of it. Of course I'll be continuing with *Chatting with Nicholas Vince* and with luck doing some more acting.

Links:

www.cn.bol.com/ncv

YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/ncv1986>

Chatting with Nicholas Vince Facebook Group

<https://www.facebook.com/jangetchattingwithnicholasvince/>

The Night Whispered Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/TheNightWhispered>

Books available on amazon:
What Monsters Do
Other People's Darkness

The Night
Whispered

a film by Nicholas Vince



THE NIGHT WHISPERED FILM BY NICHOLAS VINCE
CAST: ED, BETHANY, RACHEL, SAMUEL
MUSIC BY: NICHOLAS VINCE
EDITED BY: NICHOLAS VINCE
PRODUCTION DESIGNER: NICHOLAS VINCE

Invading Your TELEVISION



Preacher - AMC - Continuing Series

Stars:
Dominic Cooper
Tom Brooke

Synopsis:
A preacher heads out on a journey to combat the supernatural evil that just decimated his Texas hometown.

Stranger Things - Netflix - July 15, 2016 - Series Premiere

Stars:
Winona Ryder
David Harbour

Synopsis:
Set in small-town Indiana during the 1980s, the series stars Winona Ryder as a mother whose son goes missing. This leads to a whole other mystery, one including secretive government experiments, supernatural forces, and a little girl with special powers.



Slasher - Chiller TV - Streaming Series

Stars:
Katie McGrath
Brandon Jay McLaren

Synopsis:
Slasher is the first own-produced series by U.S. TV channel Chiller and centers around a young woman, Sara, who is confronted with a series of horrifying copycat murders, that are based on the widely-known killings of her parents years ago.

Outcast - Cinemax - June 3, 2016 - Series Premiere

Stars:
Wenn Schmidt
Patrick Fugit

Synopsis:
A young man searches for answers as to why he's been suffering from supernatural possessions his entire life.





Deno Sandz

AN INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR RAY GARTON: The Novels, **THE WARRENS**, **THE HERO**

By Erik Smith

With a career spanning decades, author Ray Garton is known primarily as a writer of horror (*Night Life*, *The Folks*), though he has worked in other genres, such as noir (*Murder Was My Alibi*), as well as writing novelizations (*Invaders From Mars*, *Carl's Harely Wint.*), and media tie-ins (*Sabrina*, the *Teenage Witch*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*).

Perhaps his most controversial work is *In a Dark Place: The Story of a True Haunting*, a book he "co-wrote" with Ed & Lorraine Warren, and Al & Carmen Snedeker. This same "case" was the basis for the film *The Haunting in Connecticut*. With the recent release of *The Conjuring 2*, another movie "based on a true story," I decided to ask Ray about his own experience with the Warrens.

SQ: Hello Ray. Thank you for taking the time to answer a few questions. Would you mind introducing yourself to our readers?

Ray Garton: My first novel, *Seduction*, was published in 1984, and I was totally inexperienced and had no idea what I was doing, but I have refined to go away ever since. I grew up watching horror movies on Creature Features and *Twilight Zone* and *Night Gallery*

and reading *Famous Monsters of Filmland* and a whole lot of fiction by Richard Matheson and Stephen King and Shirley Jackson and John Farris and so many other great writers who kind of created the genre for generations of readers. I grew up with my head in a perpetual Halloween, and for the last thirty years, I've been trying to create that sort of thing for others.

SQ: How do novelizations and media tie-ins, like *Warlock*, or *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* generally work?

RG: When I do a movie novelization, I'm sent the most recent draft of the script (which is often out of date by the next day) and my job is to adapt that into a novel. A screenplay is much shorter than a novel, so it's usually necessary to add some extra material to a story. The writer is given some room for that, but it's always necessary to stay within certain parameters. I had great fun writing movie novelizations. I love movies, and novelizing a script is like being given a chance to direct your version of the movie in a smaller way. They aren't as common as they used to be. I enjoyed doing them.



Slayer, my novel, *Resurrecting Ravana*, was an original novel set in the *Buffy* universe. I did the same thing with *Sabrina* the *Teenage Witch* and *The Secret World of Alex Mack*. But even though the story was original, it was still necessary to maintain certain conventions

and traditions of the series. For example, the dialogue on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* was very distinctive. No other show had that dialogue, it was very quirky but in a delightful way. To do a *Buffy* novel, you have to be familiar enough with the show to know that dialogue, and you have to be able to write it. And even when you think you know it and can write it, you still end up learning a lot about it from writing the novel. It was a more complex series than it was ever given credit for, I think. I'd like to write more. It was fun.

SQ: How did you become involved with *In a Dark Place*?

RG: My agent approached me with the job. I remembered reading about the exploits of Ed and Lorraine Warren in the *National Enquirer* when I was a kid and it sounded like fun, so I said yes. I assumed I would be dealing with some people who genuinely believed they'd had a supernatural experience.

SQ: Please, tell us about your experience with the Warrens, and the Snedeker case.



for a tie-in like *Buffy the Vampire*



RGe The Snedekers had lived in a house that, it turned out, used to be a funeral home and still had the casket lift that came up from the basement. They claimed to have encountered all kinds of frightening supernatural activity inside the house, including being raped by invisible demons. *Actually*, Ed and Lorraine Warren told me about a videotape they had of an actual materialization of one of the demons in the house. It happened on a staircase, they said. They would get me a copy of the tape before I left. The individual members of the family had stories that didn't quite mesh, and Ed and Lorraine were having a hard time finding that videotape. When I approached Ed with the problem of inconsistent stories within the family, he said, "These people are crazy. All the people who come to us are crazy. That's why they come to us. Just use what you can and make the rest up. And make it scary. You write scary books, right? Sure, you do, that's why we hired you. So make it up and make it scary." They never did find that videotape. It was perhaps the first documented visual record of supernatural phenomenon but . . . they misplaced it. Never to be seen again.

Ed and Lorraine Warren were utter frauds. Ed's gone now, but Lorraine is still around and still peddling this stuff. They've long been known as frauds. No one I know of outside their little cult-like follow-

ing takes them seriously. They are routinely dismissed as charlatans. But they are kept alive by more movies and books, all (except mine) claiming to be true stories. Only two kinds of people do take them seriously: those who need to believe no matter what, for their own reasons, whatever they may be, and fellow snake-oil salesmen working in the same business as the Warrens. Ed and Lorraine built their career by preying on vulnerable people who did, indeed, need help, but real help, not the kind they were offering. And they usually roped children into their schemes, which I find reprehensible.

The entire time I was there, Carmen Snedeker's biggest concern was how much they might make off of a movie sale. She was the one who told me the stories about being "raped" by invisible demons while washing the dishes, while in bed, and I included those in the book. Once she actually read the book and realized how ridiculous, how laughable, those claims were, she began to say that I had added them to the book and denounced them, saying they were my invention. Carmen's whole story has changed so many times that there's little resemblance between what she told me, what was in the Discovery Channel re-enactment, and what was in the movie, and now I understand she's writing another version of the book. Now Carmen claims she's some kind of psychic healer and that she's been psychic her whole life. Apparently, this ability was on hiatus while she lived in the allegedly demon-in-

fest house and her son was telling her there were evil forces in the house and she was dismissing it. Of course, her son turned out to be schizophrenic and told me in a phone conversation that he stopped seeing and hearing things as soon as he started taking medication, at which point Carmen ended the call.

Aside from being told to use what I could, make the rest up, and make it scary, it later became clear that the Snedekers knew, as did everyone else in the neighborhood and at the real estate agent's office, that the house was a former funeral home and that fact was not a secret. The claim by the Warrens that people had engaged in necrophilia there when there was no records whatsoever of that happening smeared the former owners of the funeral home, a well-established family in the community. Once I figured out the whole thing was a lie, I denounced the book I had written because it was sold as nonfiction and had been labeled a "true story." It was not. Some of it was fabricated by me and none of it was true in the first place. I would not sign on to a reprint unless all references to the story being true or based on factual events were removed.

In spite of the whole thing being a pile of horseshit, I wrote the book as if I were writing another horror novel and tried to make it as entertaining and frightening as I could. I'm still hearing from people who've read the book, so the experience isn't entirely tainted. In *A Dark Place* is a favorite of a lot of horror fiction fans and I'm extremely proud of that. It's always gratifying when a book I've written is enjoyed.



Continued on next page.



SQ: Do you have any thoughts on this resurgence of horror movies based on "true" stories? Why do you think that they so popular?

RG: I immediately dismiss any horror movie that claims to be based on a true story. That makes about as much sense as a *Star Trek* or *Star Wars* movie that claims to be a "true story." Horror is, by its nature, not "true" because the things that happen in the horror genre do not happen in real life. For how many thousands of years have we been frightened and manipulated by the threat of demons? In all that time, none have been found and nothing resembling "proof" of their existence has been discovered. The same goes for ghosts. They can't come back from the dead. That's not my opinion, there's a pretty vast consensus on that. Now, people believe in these things. I know, and I have nothing against them for that, but so far, those are still beliefs, which don't have to have proof. Horror movies aren't based on true stories, they're concocted by writers. I think most people — the people I know, anyway — understand and accept that. The paranormal industry has never been so popular and seems to be gradually replacing or at least merging with that other industry of extraordinary claims supported by nothing, religion, and with the belief in extraterrestrials that are active in human affairs. Who knows what they'll end up turning into.

SQ: Switching gears, you were in the news last year, for a bit of heroics. Would you please tell us about that?

RG: On a Monday night at the end of March in 2015, I heard a scream outside. The front door was open with the security door closed and I looked out to see our neighbor across the street, a young woman in her 20s, running up our sloping lawn followed by a pretty creepy, menacing looking guy. They both reached the porch at about the same time and he began physically attacking her. She was carrying her Chihuahua and he punched her in the face, knocking the dog to the ground (he ran home). I managed to get the door open enough to let her in without letting him in. He was on drugs and ranting and raving nonsensically, but as soon as she got inside, he began to threaten us. He said he was coming inside to kill us. Then he threw a brick through our kitchen window and tried to climb inside.

The closest weapon to me was a decorative fantasy knife we had received as a Christmas gift a few years ago. I grabbed it and stabbed the guy twice, once each time he reached his arm into the shattered window to climb inside. Then he walked over to our living room window and punched the outer of the two panes until it shattered, cutting his hand before retreating to the kitchen window. By then, the neighbors had rushed to our rescue and tried to distract him, then the police arrived and had to shoot him twice with a taser before he would go down. It was a terrifying

experience for all of us, and I ended up writing a horror story about it called "A Flat and Dreary Monday Night," which you can find in *Cat Coenars: Volume Two* from Sinister



Grin Press.

SQ: Finally, what are you working on now? Is there anything you would like to plug?

RG: I'm doing several things right now, which probably isn't a good idea because I'm a lousy multitasker. I'm working on a new novel (*Monster Show*), trying to finish an old one that's overdue after an extended illness (*Poker Night*), I'm doing several unrelated short stories and vignettes that will be collected in a book called *Illuminati Circus*, and I'm preparing a number of books for self-publication, something I'm trying my hand at for the first time. So far, I've published my novella *Vortex*, a Mophett and Keoph investigation, and I'll soon be publishing *Wailing and Gnashing of Teeth*, my collection of religious horror stories that was released by Cemetery Dance a few years ago in a limited edition. The new edition will have extra stories, including a brand new one that wasn't in the hardcover.

Once more, thank you for your time, Ray.



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- THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS FROM -

By Deno Sands

Horror Novelist, Deno Sands was born in Alabama, but raised in Chicago, Illinois and now resides in Ohio; an U.S. Army Veteran. He has published novels such as: "Miss Mary Weather: A Southern Nightmare" (2000), "Pen of Iniquity" (2008), "I, AM: A Force of Relentless Evil" (2010), "Blood Plantation" (2011), "Cry Heaven Cry Hell...The Return of Miss Mary Weather(Sequel)" (2013), "Isiah Shaw" (2014), "The House of Shaggy-La" (2014), "Seven Dreams: A Dialogue with Evil," (2014), "Whorehouse on Penguin Creek," (2015), "The Sin Cup" (2016), "The Devil's Whisper" (2016), and has numerous unpublished novels not yet dated for release...

My definition of journey, is to start from one point in your life and ending up at your destination. My journey towards reading and writing unfolded at an early age. I began citing complete words and was able for the most part, write them down. However, conflicts I faced during my childhood could have hindered my advancement, but did not.

As a young boy my imagination was fueled by myths and superstitions, heard from my grandmother, mother, and other people in the south. Nightmares became a second nature to me while growing up. The only way to conquer them was to write them down. Soon I grew a custom to them and learned to love the depth of my horrific

dream. My desire to spread fear (False Evidence Appearing Real) spawned from these nightmares. I believe in ghost, demons, angels, saints, God, Satan, good, and evil the other world I write about would not exist. Fiction and truth are close friends. I remember my father taking me to the library as an extracurricular activity.

He would always say, "Read, write, and comprehend. The pen is mightier than the sword." My journey to reading and writing has taken me through aisles of literature books. My father believed that information is knowledge and knowledge is found in books.

My mother was and is a great writer and told stories about real life, southern myths, and superstitions. My father was extremely intelligent. He was a man of vision, a cultured historian, and researcher. My father prided himself on having knowledge even on his deathbed thirteen years ago.

Our families' foundation, our very existence is built on learning. My mother loved church and had me sitting next to her every Sunday as a child. In my hands, I always held a large semi-frayed brown bible flipping through the pages, trying to read every word.

Sometimes no matter how silent I flipped the noise would disturb her due to the fact the church was quiet. The large words that eluded



my vocabulary intrigued me. I thirsted for knowledge and loved it. I always wanted to be like my father and mother. They are the seekers of knowledge. They possess the passion for the power of the pen and the unswerving freedom of reading. Mother would say, "Our people struggled through slavery, Jim Crow laws, racism, and segregation in order to be able to read and write. My mother is a Pastor and my father was a Veteran and an Air Traffic Controller, both born in the south. I would be defying my bloodline if I did not strive to be the best writer. I remember my father asked me if I knew where America hides information on the past. I didn't know. Then, he smiled and said, "Books." Reading inspired me and writing compelled me to use my imagination. Combined they saved my life and summoned the gift I use to this day.

Family influence on a child can be administered in only two ways, beneficially or negatively. I received the beneficial and I'm forever grateful. Everyday there is a struggle in me to turn the tides of this genre. "The business nature of these magistrates of literary placement can send waves that crash against your soul and your talent; becoming at some point a battering ram that shakes your inner foundation at unexpected times. Endure...endure I speak to myself



- NEOPHYTE to DOMINUS in the HORROR GENRE -

on the mental shores of perpetual thought of becoming the best.

Melodies from my spiritual ocean of dark imagination and creativity are lightened by the native songs of my ancestors embedded in a distance of encouragement and embracing me. My reality rears its pilgrimage symbol; a fictional birth mask on the souls of its readers as I progress in this horror fiction endeavor.

About sixteen years ago I pulled out *Miss Mary Weather: A Southern Nightmare* that had been hand written and I said, "Why not type it and submit it." The rest is history. There aren't many notable African-American horror writers in the horror genre that could spark true fear. I could have written drama, urban gangster, sex, etc. However, I wanted the world to know that by driving the nail down with a thunderous hammer of creativity, visualization, and imagination that horror is being brought forth by an African-American male who embraces the genre of horror beyond literary belief. This motivates me to want to bring unconditional life to the horror fictional world.

I've written short stories that have dramatic plots. I've written poems about reality and comedy and emotional screenplays. Also, I've had the opportunity to write articles on society, religion, and human interest. One thing I've learned is that writers should take the good reviews

with the bad reviews and not complain. Learning not to complain in America's literary society is easier than learning to complain. You must understand that the Systematic structure in the literary industry can one day be disapproving, unimaginative, and even disrespectful leaving you at odds with your writing ambitions. Unless there is a deep rooted strength of survival embedded in you to continue on and make a difference in history.

"You must fight the good fight." This is my life and my dream despite the everyday struggles to take care of a family. So there's no foreshadowing of the future. But I believe my future rest on my "writing gift," and yes, it is what I thought it would be. You have to color before you can write, equates to crawl before you walk. Accomplishment is the foundation of hope. Without hope a writer never gets to his/her pinnacle.

The advice I would give aspiring writers: Create your own style, and be complacent, even though, some may not grasp your creativity at that time. Also, if you are not inspired to write on your own, why write. If you are not willing to be inspired, why write. Bad reviews should not discourage you from continuing to write, build on them. In addition, remember: "If a writer's work is to be read, the writer too must be read."-Deno Sande

There are three things I wish I had

known before reaching this point in my career. I would have tried to save more money to promote my books, not to except every offer from publishers who did not understand my vision, and how patient you must be to even get a glimmer of what a successful writer is. There is satisfaction and disappointment in this meticulous literary horror realm. I see it like this: There could not be good without bad, light without dark, and moon without sun. Therefore, I must say I've received more satisfaction as my career has progressed. The disappointment comes early on in your career.

I create horror books; however, my objective is to leave behind a legacy to my children and grandchildren. Legacies can be left behind on a rock or tree by writing your name. They can also be legacies of greatness and success despite the obstacles and barriers. My legacy to them will be my love for literature and an understanding of what I have accomplished. I would like to leave you with this:

I AM A CREATIVE, I AM UNIQUE, and I AM A STORY-TELLER. I hold these horrors to be self-written, that all of them are created with equal FRIGHT, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable NIGHTMARES that among these are EVIL, FEAR, DARKNESS, and the pursuit of Visualization, Imagination, and Creativity within the readers mind.

All books are available @ www.amazon.com/authors/denosande



THE NECRONOMICON

From Abdul Alhazred to Sam Raimi and In-between:

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU READ

By Jeff Mohr

Ancient book of mystic incantations? Gateway to the depths of hell and other dark realms and dimensions? Escape hatch for demons and the Ancient/Elder/Old Ones to move from the Abyss into our world? Legendary book of the dead? Or fictional creation, created and nurtured through the last century by a cadre of Weird Tales pulp fiction writers and their present day counterparts?

The Necronomicon is the fictional creation of the one and only Howard Phillips Lovecraft, about whom Stephen King has said, "Now that time has given us some perspective on his work, I think it is beyond doubt that H.P. Lovecraft has yet to be surpassed as the Twentieth Century's greatest practitioner of the classic horror tale." In general, the Necronomicon is depicted as a history of The Old Ones and contains the means for summoning them. It made its first appearance in Lovecraft's short story, "The Hound", written in 1922. However, its alleged author, Abdul Alhazred, the "Mad Arab", made an even earlier appearance in H.P.'s 1921 short story, "The Nameless City."

Lovecraft wrote a brief piece, "The History of the Necronomicon", in 1927, though it was not published until 1938, after his death. In this faux history, he documents that the book was written by Alhazred in Yemen circa 780 A.D. The original title was *Al Azif*, meaning the nocturnal sounds made by insects, or in Lovecraft's interpretation, "the howling of daemons." Again, according to

Lovecraft's fictional backstory, Alhazred wrote the tome after spending ten years alone in certain Arabian deserts that were "held to be inhabited by protean evil spirits and menaces of death." Though accounts differ, Alhazred is said to have died after being "seized by an invisible monster and devoured horrifically before a large number of fright-frozen witnesses." Lovecraft also wrote that the *Al Azif* was translated to Greek in 950 A.D. when it assumed the title *Necronomicon*. Lovecraft's version of the Greek translation of the word "necronomicon", is "an liturgy of the law of the dead."

Amid centuries of whispered rumors and a Latin translation, the Arabic original has been lost and both the Greek and Latin versions were hunted by Pope Gregory IX. In 1252, No Greek copy has been seen "since the burning of a certain Sales man's library in 1692." The only five known copies are said to be under lock and key in the British Museum, the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris, the Widener Library at Harvard, the University of Buenos Ayres, and finally in the library of Miskatonic University at Arkham. "The History of the Necronomicon" also makes a cross-reference to another Lovecraft story, "Pickman's Model," when it claims that, "A still vaguer rumour credits the preservation of a sixteenth-century Greek text in the Salemi family of Pickman; but if it was so preserved, it vanished with the artist R.U. Pickman, who disappeared early in 1926."

It has been speculated that Robert W. Chambers' *The King in Yellow* was one of H.P.'s inspirations for the Necronomicon. However, other sources claim that H.P. never read *The King in Yellow* until 1927. There's no doubt that Lovecraft was influenced by Chambers and The

King in Yellow, but the existence of Alhazred and the Necronomicon in H.P.'s writings, predates his reading of the Chambers work. Then, in "The History of the Necronomicon," H.P. implies that though the powers that be have focused significant effort into suppressing the existence of the Necronomicon, rumors of its existence and contents likely gave Robert W. Chambers the idea for writing *The King in Yellow*, a book that was said to unhinge the minds of its readers. It's a bit like the ouroboros, the tail-devouring snake. Some think *The King in Yellow* inspired the idea of the Necronomicon, but in H.P.'s fictional world, the Necronomicon inspired the writing of *The King in Yellow*.

Besides Chambers, Lovecraft's influences included Edgar Allan Poe, Arthur Machen, and Algernon Blackwood. The influence of Poe can be seen in the opening line of Poe's "The Man in the Crowd" which reads, "It was well said of a certain German book that 'er lässt sich nicht lesen' - it does not permit itself to be read. There are secrets that do not permit themselves to be told." It's not out of line to imagine this as a spark to lighting Lovecraft's imagination in the creation of the Necronomicon.

But what about contemporaries of Lovecraft? Many of them added to what would later be referred to as the Cthulhu Mythos and included references to the Necronomicon. They even created their own forbidden texts as well for example, Clark Ashton Smith's *Book of Eibon*, Robert Bloch's *De Vermis Mysteriis*, and Robert E. Howard's *Unausprechlichen Kulten*. Lovecraft in turn, welcomed this cross pollination and used these creations to expand the Mythos. Authors incorporating reference to the Necronomicon

in their own work include Clark Ashton Smith, Fritz Leiber, Robert Bloch, Frank Belknap Long, Lin Carter, Henry Kuttner, August Derleth, Brian Lumley, Ramsey Campbell, and many others. As short story collections based on Lovecraft's Mythos continue to be released, the list will surely grow.

The contents of the Necronomicon, for the most part, are left to the imagination, making it a great plot device that can be used to explain the presence of hideous, unnamable creatures and unspeakable evils that reside in hidden earthly domains, the far reaches of the cosmos, or otherworldly dimensions. Lovecraft does quote a passage from page 751, so it is generally accepted that the evil volume is massive and comes in around 800 pages in length. Its appearance is also left somewhat to the imagination and is described only as bound in leather with metal claps. However, it is also sometimes disguised as a different book entirely, so as you know, you can't judge a book by its cover anyway.

As a result of the posthumous popularity of H.P. Lovecraft, it's not surprising that several impositions have appeared on the market. There have been counterfeit title cards for the Necronomicon inserted in card catalogs of libraries as pranks and to reinforce the existence of the ancient grimoire. Imitations have also been produced, the most well-known of which is the Necronomicon by Simen, which bears no resemblance to anything Lovecraftian except the title. There are a few other fakes that at least attempt to exist within and contain elements of HPL's Cthulhu Mythos and to their credit, they admit they are fictional and do not profess to be the real deal. There's even a fictional biography of Abdul Alhazred. However, for my money, they miss the point. It's what you don't know, what you don't see that makes it horrifying — shadowy, vague references to unspeakable names that which cannot be unseen, nebulous cosmic netherworlds,

mist-shrouded portals to dark dimensions populated by indescribable horrors. Unspeakable names and indescribable horrors lose some of their dread quotient when you try to speak their names and describe the horrors. But maybe that's just me.

What about other media?

The Necronomicon appears in many comic books as well. For example, written by Alan Moore and illustrated by Jacen Burrows, the four-issue Necronomicon won a Bram Stoker Award. For another distinct variation, check out *Afterlife With Archie*, written by Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa with art by Francisco Francavilla.

The Internet Movie Database has no less than 152 credits listed as inspired by or based on the works of H.P. Lovecraft. How many of them include the Necronomicon as a factor of the story? How many at least make reference to it? I have no idea, but there are over forty matches to a "Necronomicon" keyword search in IMDb. They range from 1963's *The Hallowed Palace* to 2015's *Star series Ark in Evil Dead* and beyond and seem to be increasing in frequency. Probably the most well-known and most popular are Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead*, *Evil Dead 2*, and *Army of Darkness*, which spawned the aforementioned TV series and feature their own version of the book, the Necronomicon Ex-Mortis, bound in human skin and written in blood.

The Necronomicon also makes an appearance in modern music. For example, it has been mentioned or quoted by Tech N9ne, Metallica, Iron Maiden, U2, and Nos Arcana. In addition, it is also integral to various board games, role playing games, and video games. So yes, despite some efforts by various forces of evil to persuade us that it is a real grimoire, the Necronomicon is a fictional tome created by H.P. Lovecraft and has been nurtured and expanded by various practitioners over the last century

in prose, poetry, comic books, music, television, movies, and gaming. Although there might be fingers that find issue with the fictional aspect of my assessment, I'll let Mr. Lovecraft speak for himself in this excerpt from his letter to Willis Conover in 1936:

"Now about the 'terrible and forbidden books' — I am forced to say that most of them are purely imaginary. There never was any Abdul Alhazred or Necronomicon, for I invented these names myself. ... At far serious writers books on dark, occult, and supernatural themes — in all truth they don't amount to much. That is why it's more fun to invent mythical works like the Necronomicon and Book of Eibon.

Well, he does say "MOST of them are purely imaginary." And I suppose it's possible that HPL's answer was part of a grand subterfuge meant to keep from provoking or inciting Yip-Sorboth, awakening Cthulhu, or antagonizing The Old Ones. Either way, just for safety's sake, I'm sticking with H.P. Lovecraft's answer ... and it would probably be prudent if you do the same.

Lovecraft's complete works are available from multiple sources and on e-book for a nominal fee. And if you insist on snoring free, you can get more information on the Necronomicon as they website (which I borrowed heavily from):
http://lovecraft.wikia.com/wiki/Main_Page
<http://www.hplonline.com/>
<http://www.dharmagrimoire.com/>
Lovecraft
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Necronomicon>

But be careful. There's a fine line between obsession and madness and many of us, being driven mad, are very short trip indeed.

Games of MADNESS

A contemporary look at classic creepy, atmospheric, Lovecraft-esque video games

By Mike Ammerino

I love horror movies and I love video games, but there's sadly a large absence of great, atmospheric horror games (and by "atmospheric horror games" I don't mean your *A Nightmare on Elm Street* board game). That's not to say that they don't exist, there's plenty of great horror games out there, but more gimmicky stuff and more shooter stuff than actual atmospheric terror. I can suck the dick of *FEAR*, and *Resident Evil 4* all day long, but those aren't exactly the types of games I want to talk about in this article. I'm going to dig more into games such as American McGee's *Alice* and *Nightmare Creatures*, *Nightmarish* worlds and beings that look like they've stepped straight out of the mind of Lovecraft, digging into these games as well as sequels/spiritual successors that you may not have heard of.



American McGee's *Alice* (2000)

Considering Lovecraft's father was institutionalized—dying in that hospital in 1898—before Lovecraft was even four years old, the opening

of this video game puts us right into that nice, warm Lovecraft-y mood. American McGee's *Alice* follows the titular heroine as she is hospitalized, her mind lost after her parents' horrific death when she was a child. The macabre, nightmarish *Wonderland* is a figment of her imagination. We play as *Alice* trying to save *Wonderland*, which is her way of subconsciously trying to herself from her own psychosis.

This is one game that has aged admirably, remaining one of the most imaginative platform games out there. 16 years after its release, the demented *Wonderland* is still a compelling journey. First order of business is the designs themselves, of the environments and the creatures. The weird, warped designs of the Cheshire Cat, Card Guards and even *Alice* herself are very gothic-by-styles, everything being very lanky and fine-edged. Whereas when I think of Lovecraft I think of these large, cosmic beings like *Cthulhu*, this game delivers these smaller monsters that have that cosmic feel. They don't feel demonic, they truly feel like they're from another world—another planet altogether.

That's what sets it apart from creatures you'd see in a game like *Doom* or *Resident Evil*, that other-worldly element. So much so that even the loading screens in between levels is a small building surrounded by space and stars. The environments themselves, such as *The Land of Fire and Belmstone*, give that bleak atmosphere that you get from Lovecraft.

This video game is a platform action-adventure, but it's more unique than your typical game of that genre because of that bleak atmosphere, which American McGee and the game designers managed to obtain tremendously.

The dialogue here also lends itself to the eerie storytelling, feeling very Lovecraftian in its poetic structure. If Lovecraft himself wrote a video game, or an *Alice* in *Wonderland* adaptation, it would sound something like this game.

Whether you're a gamer or a fan of Lovecraft, you should dig up a copy of this game. Its storytelling is very captivating with the unique designs, poetic dialogue, and fun game play. That's what surprised me the most, the fact that it's still an extremely addicting game today. All of the Lovecraft and design stuff aside, it's just a platformer, but a really fun platformer. It's not just *Mario Bros.* with *Alice*, it's a game that owns that platform element.



Sequels/Spiritual Successors

In 2011, a sequel titled *Alice: Madness Returns* hit shelves. The

gameplay itself is pretty standard, with a lot of the storytelling feeling too similar to the first game instead of doing something unique. That being said, I found it to be a far more frightening game with its monsters, which I saw as even more Lovecraftian than what's found in the first game. If you're a gamer, you can pass on it, but if you're a Lovecraft person or you're someone who'll play a game just to admire the character/environment designs, then you should pick it up. You can probably find it new for less than ten bucks today.



Nightmare Creatures (1997)

This game takes place in London, in the year 1834. The dead have begun to wake from their graves, people have been turning into ghoulish beings, and a menagerie of different monsters have been spotted around the city. It seems as though these strange happenings are connected to a mad scientist, and a devil-worshipping cult from the 1600's.

As I said early on in this article, atmosphere plays a huge role in these games, which is certainly the case with Nightmare Creatures. It's not a particularly creepy game, it's more of an action game with gothic elements, but it gives you that feeling of an alternate dimension, another staple of Lovecraft. The game takes

place on Earth, but it feels like an Earth-2 type of thing, an alternate reality that was specifically designed by Lovecraft himself. To me, that's the biggest Lovecraft element here, that feeling of being in another dimension. That fear of the unknown. The creatures in this game aren't exactly cosmic in nature, they're much more warped-reality. Lovecraft was very Xenophobic, so things that were foreign or unknown frightened him, which was why these creatures feel like something that he would both fear and write about. You get large bats, werewolves, other indescribable creatures, stuff that you'd find in *Weird Tales* or the *Neuro-nomicon*.

I'm getting a lot of these out of the way so I can get right down to it; this game hasn't aged well. Listen, it's a product of its time and the creatures are awesome, but it is a product of its time. The gameplay is stilted, the story isn't as interesting as I'd like it to be, and it gets repetitive.

What keeps it from being boring are those creature designs. The game starts out with zombies and werewolves, but you get into freaky shit later on. Six-headed spiked serpents, long-armed black hulking beings, truly weird stuff.

For Lovecraft fans, you should check it out for just the designs alone, but gamers have no reason to go back to visit this unless you have a childhood connection to it. You may be wondering why I even brought this game up if I was just going to rag on it, but it felt right because it truly harkens back to Lovecraft in a way that *Alice* doesn't. They both have Lovecraft-based creatures, but *Nightmare Creatures*

features designs much wilder than what you'll find in *Alice*. If nothing else, pick up the art book to this.



Sequels/Spiritual Successors

In 2000, Konami produced *Nightmare Creatures II*, a sequel that focuses more on France than London, but you get all of the familiar oddities of the first game. The gameplay is very similar to the first one, the differences here being better frame rate and some new creatures. If you were a big fan of the first game, I'd say check this out. It has a much more gothic castle setting than the first one, which I thought was a bit more interesting. This game feels heavier on the Lovecraft influences, so fans of his will take to it kindly. If anything, the creatures aren't as inventive, but the setting makes for a fun play session.



Amnesia: The Dark Descent (2010)

When I think of Lovecraftian video
Continued on next page...

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games, this is the first one that comes to mind. Amnesia puts you in the shoes of Daniel, a man who has awoken in a dark castle with no way to get out. You solve puzzles and dodge ghastly creatures as you attempt to break out of the nightmarish prison.

I'd say that Alice and Nightmare Creatures moves faster than Amnesia in terms of pacing, but neither are nearly as moody as this survival horror masterpiece. The castle alone literally feels like something that Lovecraft would've built if had the ability to, creatures and all. Just as Lovecraft's writing transports you to those worlds, this game makes you feel as if you are in that castle yourself. The castle feels like a portal to another world, housing some of the most horrifying creatures I've ever seen in not just video games, but from movies and books as well.

When I read a Lovecraft book, this is the kind of environment that I picture. Dark, dim lighting and slimy, musky textures, they create a heavy atmosphere that gives you this feeling that someone is behind you every step of the way. The creatures are also some of the most creative, nightmarish creations that you'll ever encounter in a video game. They feel like things that crawled out of the deepest, darkest depths

of Lovecraft's psyche, beings that crawled out of the darkest dimensions of space and time, making for a horrific gameplay experience. If you're a gamer, it's a breath of fresh air from Call of Duty and Halo, giving an interesting story and a genuinely frightening experience. For fans of Lovecraft, it's the epitome of his darkest tales. There's no way to discuss Lovecraft's influence in today's mediums without mentioning Amnesia: The Dark Descent. It's the perfect adaptation of his works without being a direct adaptation of one of those stories.



Sequels/Spiritual Successors

In 2013, Amnesia: The Dark Descent spawned a sequel titled Amnesia: A Machine for Pigs. The game follows a new cast and timeline, but it is very much in the same vein as the first game. Like the sequels mentioned above, it's more of the same. The gameplay and puzzles

aren't super unique, making for an experience that isn't as frightening as the first installment. That being said, the narrative and storytelling is still very interesting and it keeps in the tone of Lovecraft, while using creative environment and character designs. It may not be as frightening or fresh as the first game, but it still sticks to the Lovecraft heart and still manages to tell a really cool gothic tale. I'd say it's worth picking up if you have the time and money.

There you have it, three of the major key players in the Lovecraft presence in video games. I could've gone with stuff like the game Call of Cthulhu, but I thought it was better to go with games with less direct ties to his lore, but still have that heavy influence. These are games that have heavy psychological focuses, while still delivering cosmic beings and ghoulish creatures that feel as if they've crawled out of Lovecraft's diary. Just as his books transport you to these dark, moody worlds, these games take you on atmospheric, creepy adventures through the doorways of the universe's darkest dimensions. In a world of shooters and racing games, there aren't enough games like this out there. I've given you only a taste of the hidden gems that will not only wet the appetite of any gamer, but also the appetite of any Lovecraft fan.



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When LOVECRAFT Met LEE

By Erik Smith

It's a match made in R'lyeh.

Howard Phillips Lovecraft. Progenitor of the Cthulhu Mythos. Despite his controversial beliefs, no one can deny his contribution to the fields of horror and dark fantasy literature. His works have inspired, and been adapted as, movies, video games, comics, tabletop games, radio plays, etc.

Edward Lee is the king of hardcore horror. Lee's outrageous descriptions of sex and violence will, by turns, make you squirm, or, when he goes completely over the top, laugh out loud. His stories are not for the easily offended, or the faint of heart.

At first glance, this seems to be an odd pairing. Yet, between 2009 and 2011, the world was introduced to six books by Edward Lee, each of which, in its own way, turned the Cthulhu Mythos on its head. And it worked. For those who find Lovecraft's writing a bit dry, and lacking in gore and bondage. I present to you:



Trolley No. 1852. (1st edition: Bloodletting Press, 2009; Paperback edition: Deadite Press, 2010.)

According to this story, in 1934 Lovecraft was having difficulty with his writing, and his low finances were becoming a problem. So, when a mysterious letter arrives, inviting him to contribute to a small periodical, he eventually decides to submit a story. Eventually, because there is a catch: the story must be pornographic. This novella is bookended with chapters featuring Lovecraft himself, while the

bulk is made up of "Lovecraft's" pornographic tale, titled *Trolley No. 1852*. One of the two stories on this list that most closely mimic Lovecraft's writing style (which only makes sense, as it was "written" by "Lovecraft"), it is also the most bizarre.

Going Monstering. (1st edition: Bloodletting Press, 2009; Paperback edition: Arcane Wonders, 2011.) Ann White is pledging Alpha House. She will go through a week of increasing depravity and degradation, in her attempt to join the sorority, which houses a secret of unspeakable evil. I often forget to include this one, on the Lee/Lovecraft list. While it features characters and creatures created by Lovecraft, it is, to me, the most Lee in style. So over the top, you half to laugh, to keep from becoming sick to your stomach.

The Haunter of the Threshold. (1st edition: Infernal House, 2009; Paperback edition: Deadite Press, 2010.) A sequel to Lovecraft's *The Haunter of the Dark*, set in the modern day, this is the story of Hazel Greene, a woman who enjoys over fetish you can think of. She moves to a "backwater town," where she encounters haunted cabins, magic gems, monsters both human and other, as well as TENTACLES! Written in Lee's outrageous style, this still touches on many of Lovecraft's otherworldly themes.

The Innsmouth Horror. (1st edition: Cemetery Dance, 2010; Paperback edition: Deadite Press, 2010.) In 1939, Lovecraft fan Foster Morley is on a bus tour, attempting to visit the places that inspired his favorite author. He ends up in Innsmouth Point. The strange villagers and odd goings on cause Morley to think that perhaps Lovecraft also visited this hidden village, and was inspired to write *The Shadow*

Over Innsmouth. Fans of *Dagon* and the Deep Ones should enjoy this tale of fabled perversion, as Morley tries to solve the mystery of Innsmouth, and escape with his life.



Pages Torn From a Travel Journal. (1st edition: Morning Star, 2010; Paperback edition: Deadite Press, 2013.)

The second story presented here, that most closely copies Lovecraft's style. This is the literary equivalent of a found footage film. We are reading pages from a journal "written" by "Lovecraft," who, on a bus tour of Virginia, decides to visit "O'Slaughnessy's Travelling Show," when the bus breaks down. The horrors he witnesses there send him running into the woods, where he will encounter even greater terrors. Fans of Lee will get a kick out of a particular scene, that ties into the author's most notorious stories.

The Dunwich Romance. (1st edition: Bloodletting Press, 2011; Paperback edition: Deadite Press, 2013.) A companion piece to *The Dunwich Horror*, this story takes place between the lines of Lovecraft's tale. While trying to accomplish the goals set forth for him in *Horror*, Wilbur Whateley stumbles upon an unlikely romance. My personal favorite, for the way it cleaves to the original, while skewing so far into the demented sex and violence that is Lee's calling card. And, amazingly, it is actually a heartwarming love story.

There you have it: The six sickening offspring of Lovecraft and Lee. Read them, if your sanity, and stomach, can handle it.

SEX, MURDER, VIXENS

The Graphic Novels Of Geo Brawn IV

By Ray Nichols

In another time there was a thing called underground comics. These comics thumbed their noses at the comics code and printed whatever sort of material they wished. Sometimes highly sexualized, sometimes exceptionally gory. There was no way these comics were going to be picked up by a regular publisher, and they sure as hell weren't getting the seal of approval from the Comics Code Authority. Yet, that didn't mean they were bad comics! These were creators who wanted to do things their own way without some oversight committee telling them how much boob they can show, or how much viscera is acceptable.

Thanks to the magic of self publishing, and about a dozen other factors, the spirit of underground comics is still alive and well. They may not have the same underground charm as they did once upon a time, but the sentiment is still the same. Creators making their own projects and bringing them to the masses. Now however, there's no more poorly xeroxed pages hastily stapled together. Now production values are through the roof compared to the hoops creators had to jump through in the good old days. You may not be able to pick up the saucier stuff on Comixology or at most local comic shops, but they are out there.

Ready to relive those glory days of having a comic in the house that your parents would freak out if they found it? A comic that would have needed to be tucked under the mattress alongside the Playboy? Welcome to wonderful world of Geo Brawn!

Nice segue huh? Well it's true. Geo has four graphic novels out there that wouldn't be considered pornographic, but they certainly do not shy away from human (or monster) sexuality. From deep in the bowels of The Pirate Office (Geo's Lair) a unique smattering of horror was born. All four graphic novels take place in a shared universe. While the stories may not be immediately recognizable as having a common heritage, read them through and you'll see. It's there. Of course some are very obvious, such as the sequential volumes, and that's always nice having a large and expansive shared universe.

So what exists in this world? Well, how do you feel about zombies? Yep, there's zombies. Witchcraft? Check. Angels? You bet! Vampires and werewolves? Well that should just be a given at this point. The one you weren't expecting though is the one you'll be dying to read. How about a special squad of humans and monsters tracking down and killing the nocturnal denizens that threaten the fabric of our society? Oh hell yeah. Now we're talking! Ready to jump in? Here we go!

Rosabelle: and the constant state of death



As you may have guessed by the title, Rosabelle is in a constant state of undead. Some may say a zombie type state. How long has she been alive? Where does it all start? Where do zombies come from in this world? The gore in this particular volume is pretty creative. Ever seen zombie books before? Now's your chance!

It's pretty well written as far as explaining the zombie menace and how it all works. It also introduces a few characters that you'll see pop up in the other novels. Looking for a place to start? This is it. In particular this is also the volume where you get the strongest underground comics vibe in my opinion. It's a great story with some interesting twists and turns that plays around with the zombie trope in new and fun ways. Ways you can only get away with as an independent publisher!

**Everdance: A Blood Story
- Book One**



Now we're getting deep into the mythos of this universe. A team is being formed and coming together, stories are being told, backgrounds and futures are written. This is a must read right here!

Blood Rites: Next Gen
- Book Two



Here we have a fully formed team of ass-kickers! Witchcraft and weapons are the name of the day! Follow along as a new recruit is taken in after a particularly bad run in with a vampire. The nocturnal ones don't take it easy on the team, but they doing everything they can to stop the night dwellers.

This is probably my personal favorite right here. I love me some monster team ups. Then following that up with some monster on monster battles, and topping it all off with a monster training sequence? Just awesome!

The Angel Codex - Midnight Angel



Do you like peanut butter with your chocolate? Angel mythology has always had a rich history. Geo expands on it in this volume. There's some fascinating storylines and twists and turns. Plus some seriously cool Angel on Angel battle time. Make sure to check this one out as well!



As I said before, these are not kids comics. There's plenty of sex and violence and strong language to keep anyone happy, but they are meant for a more mature audience.

You can find them on Amazon or from his website at: <http://browngraphix.com/>

Don't forget to give him a like on Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/The-Art-and-Soul-of-Geo-Brown-TV-152451178098968>

And the Youtube channel:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrqKlid9qHQui-IAIX9TXwMw>

THE COMICS PULL LIST

(upcoming issues and series you need to be reading!)



Army of Darkness: Furious Road #5
Dynamite Entertainment
July 13, 2016

Writer: Nancy A. Collins
Artist: Kewber Baal
Cover: Gabriel Hardman

After devastating losses, humanity's last hope for salvation is down to Ash, Eva, Detacala, and a group of kung-fu monks.



Afterlife With Archie #9
Archie Comic Publications
July 6, 2016

Writer: Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa
Artist: Francesco Francavilla
Cover: Francesco Francavilla

Betty: RIP! Part 4. The Horner began in Riverdale when Reggie Mantle struck and killed Jughead's beloved pooch Hot Dog.



Cinema Purgatorio #3
Avatar Press
July 6, 2016

Writers: Alan Moore
Artist: Kevin O'Neill
Cover: Gabriel Andrade

Chrisos Gage and Gabriel Andrade bring a new kind of giant monster story to life! Apex is not only seemingly impossible to kill, but he leaves a trail of mutation and new threats in his wake!



DARK AND BLOODY #6
DC Comics
July 13, 2016

Writer: Shawn Aldridge
Artist: Scott Godlewski
Cover: Tyler Crook

All that fear and dread you've been feeling while reading this series? It's all been building to this, the final showdown between one man and the girl who has come seeking revenge.



Ghoul Scouts Night Of The Unliving Undead #2
Action Lab Entertainment
July 6, 2016

Writer: Steve Bryant
Artist: Mark Stegbauer
Cover: Mark Stegbauer

After finding their camp deserted and destroyed, the scouts have to fight their way through more zombies to reach Full Moon Hollow.



Puppet Master #17
Action Lab - Danger Zone
July 13, 2016

Writer: Shawn Gaborin
Artist: Michela Di Sacco
Cover: Antonio Ontiveros

The Bodega Bay Inn has become quite the hotspot! Sure, there's Samuel creeping around the place doing who-knows-what? and the puppets are being attacked by an unknown enemy?



Spawn #264
Image Comics
July 6, 2016

Writers: Todd McFarlane
Artist: Todd McFarlane
Cover: Erik Larsen

Spawn has to come to grips with his new power? or lack thereof.



Vampirella Vol 3 #5
Dynamite Entertainment
July 6, 2016

Writer: Kate Leth
Artist: Eman Casallas
Cover: Chrissie Zullo

What do you get when you put two werewolves, a telepath, a vampire from space, and a demonically-charged horror queen in the basement of a mansion filled with monsters?

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Deep Inside: **THE PIRATE OFFICE**

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The Axe Killer In The Attic

We've all heard the stories. A family comes home and notices things moved around in the kitchen. In the living room. They wake up to find that someone has been rooting through the house, but everyone swears they were

dead asleep. All night. They mark it up to sleepwalking or maybe even simply forgetting where they put things. There's even the possibility of someone just straight up lying to not get in trouble. Sometimes it's believed to be a ghost or poltergeist. The paranormal, the unexplained.

Then one day in the paper it hits. The entire family was found murdered. The police have no leads. However, they do find a cubby in the attic where it's very clear that someone had been living for weeks or months. The story gets passed around, becomes a whisper told at lumber parties and after a round of drinks. Everyone knows someone who knows someone that it happened to. So beware of the attic. Check the dark corners because you may never know who or what is hiding in the dark of the safety of your own house.

Scary yet? It's also a true story. As recently as this last decade. A man living in NYC found that food was disappearing from his fridge and pantry. He finally setup a camera to see what was going on. After reviewing the footage, he found a homeless woman had been living in a storage cubby above his kitchen. She would sneak down at night and drink from his milk carton and pee in the sink. Immediately after seeing this he left his apartment and called the police. The homeless woman was arrested. It appeared she had been living there for up to a year!

A similar situation happened in South Carolina in 2012. A woman and her children heard sounds coming from the attic for a couple weeks. After creeping everyone out sufficiently, they finally worked the nerve up to check it out. As it turns out, the woman's ex-boyfriend had moved into the attic after he had been released from prison. The cops showed up and hauled him back to prison. They found 4400 cups filled with urine and feces, and that he had angled the ceiling vents so he could watch her as she slept. Think that's the worst? Think again.

Germany, 1922. Andreas Gruber, the owner of Hinterskaiffeck farm, started noticing strange occurrences around the farm. Keys going missing, weird footprints, strange objects started showing up and the family heard footsteps in the attic. For whatever reason, they just ignored it and carried on about their lives. Then, March 31st of that year, the entire family was found slaughtered by an Axe.

The story gets even weirder though. The family wasn't found for four days, however the animals on the farm were well fed. This means that the murderer had been there for four days with the slaughtered family taking care of the farm until someone finally showed up.

Some urban legends are based on real events, and some of them are still happening to this day. So ask yourself the next time you hear creaking noises, was it something normal? Was it the house settling, or could there be someone or something up there?

In The Next Issue:

It's the 80's in August! The decade not the temperature. Watch out for 80's themed articles throughout the next issue, and some of the top stars from the 80's!

Some highlights from August include:

A set visit to *The Possessed*

Interviews with Charles Band and Lisa Wilcox

A new Killer Karie comic

More discussion pieces, more reviews, more of everything!

We're excited to announce that starting with this issue, SQ Horror Magazine will be published monthly! 12 issues a year. With so much support from the community, and the backing of an incredibly talented staff, SQ will be taking off. Thank you for coming along for the ride!

Don't forget to find us on the web at:

SQMAGZ.COM

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[TWITTER.COM/SQMAGZ](https://twitter.com/SQMAGZ)

Until August, stay radical!

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